May/June 1984 Number 69

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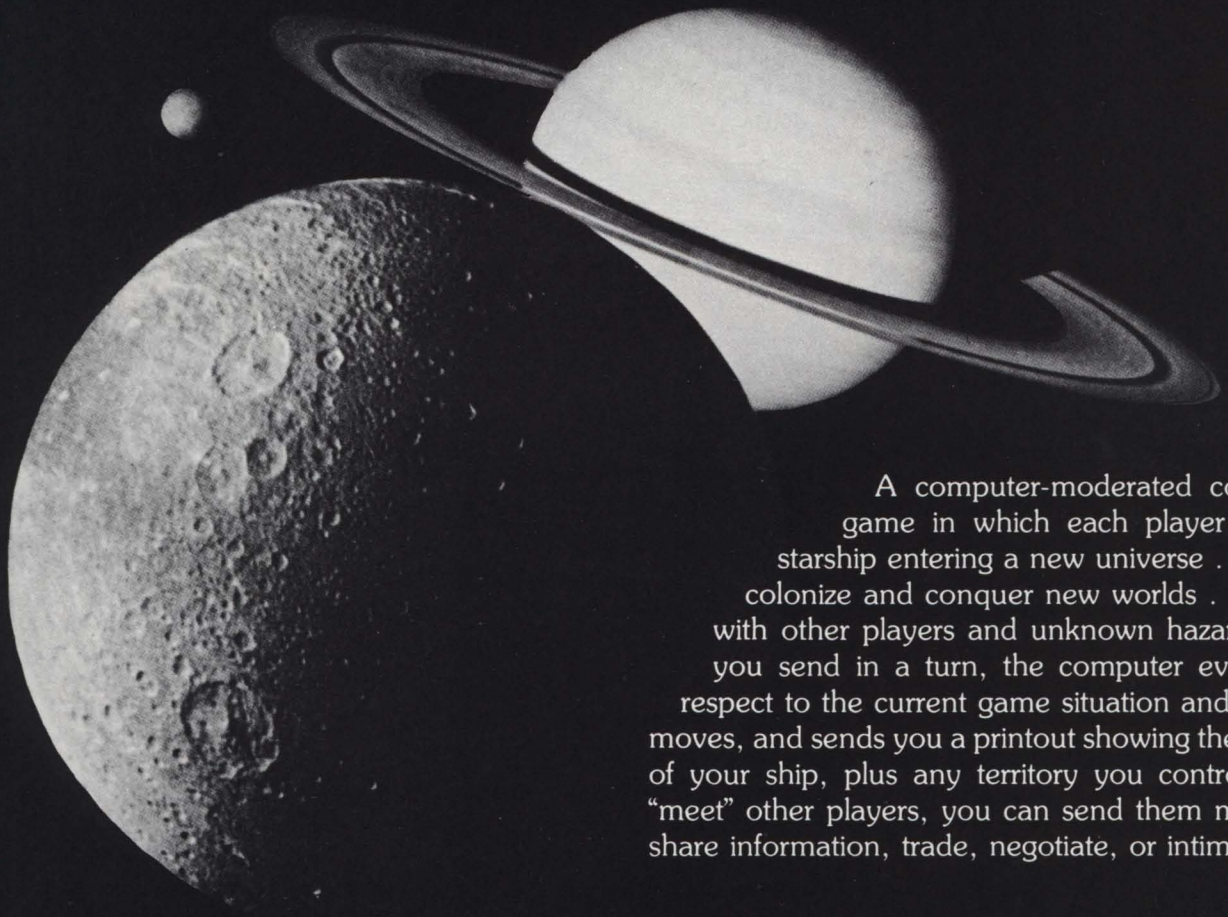

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Contributing Editors: W. G. Armintrout
William A. Barton
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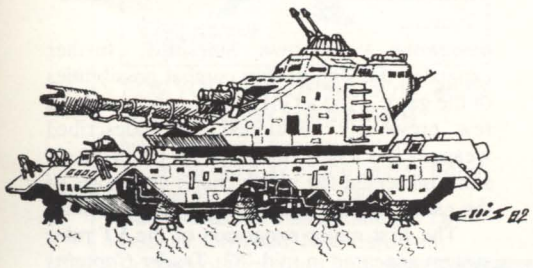

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The SFRPGs of 1983
A Pre-Origins Review
by William A. Barton

In many ways, 1983 could be considered a banner year for science fiction role-playing games: Several major new systems — and a number of minor ones — were released during the year, and a few existing systems saw their horizons expanded as well. Now we are well into 1984, and Origins is just around the corner. There, the Best Role-Playing Game of 1983 will be announced. It seems like a good time to take a look back at last year's SFRPG offerings.

Perhaps I should define what I mean by science fiction role-playing games, since my definition and yours may not exactly coincide. Within the field of SF, I include starships-and-aliens games, and such obvious spin-offs as the after-the-holocaust genre. I also extend the term to include games involving superheroes, espionage, detectives, and mercenaries — in short, anything that is technologically oriented in some way and/or does not fall specifically into the category of fantasy. This would extend the definition to include games that mix science fiction and the supernatural, such as Tri-Tac's ***Stalking the Night Fantastic*** or Chaosium's ***Call of Cthulhu***, even though

these are normally grouped with the fantasy RPGs. I'll leave in limbo that somewhat nebulous category, the "historical" RPG, of which the only notable new example released in 1983 was FGU's ***Privateers and Gentlemen***.

Finally, I should include the disclaimer that I will not include *every* SFRPG published in 1983. It's simply impossible for one person to keep track of everything in a field that is so diverse and growing so rapidly. If I overlook or otherwise slight your favorite game, I apologize in advance. I might also point out that there's always the letters column available for those who might demand equal time.

Last year seemed to be *the* year for licensing coups, as two of the most popular TV/movie series of all time were translated into role-playing games. I'm referring, of course, to FASA's ***Star Trek: The Role Playing Game*** and Victory Games' ***James Bond 007: Role Playing in Her Majesty's Secret Service***. Both games were released with top-quality packaging, a lot of support material either initially or immediately following, and a lot of expectation in the gaming world at large. And both seem to have sold quite well (most copies of either game disappearing off the shelves of local gaming stores soon after their release). Both games, too, will soon be supported by magazines published by their parent or affiliated companies — FASA's *Stardate* and Avalon Hill's *Heroes* (which I assume will feature Bond material more or less regularly, considering Victory Games' ties with AH). Of the two, however, ***Star Trek*** seems to be the biggest winner, at least in my opinion — and not only because it was released so much earlier in the year than the Bond game.

While James Bond may be one of the most notable figures of modern popular culture, *Star Trek* is a phenomenon. That fact alone ensures that a game based on the *Star Trek* mythos will be a bestseller. The fact that the game is also well-designed and quite playable clinches it. In fact, according to Howard Barasch's *Insider* newsletter, ***Star Trek*** outsold ***Traveller, Star Frontiers***, and ***Space Opera*** in Sears' 1983 Christmas catalog. And sales continue to be strong.

Faithful in the extreme to the established *Star Trek* universe of the TV series and movies, ***ST:RPG*** has fulfilled the dream I think most SFRPGers have had at one time or another — to beam aboard the U.S.S. *Enterprise* or one of her sister ships; lock phasers onto a Klingon battlecruiser; employ the Vulcan nerve pinch on an opponent; or simply explore strange new worlds, discover new civilizations, and boldly go where no man has gone before. And it has done this in an extremely playable, yet relatively complete manner — hence its popularity. ***ST:RPG*** also has the distinction of featuring the first — and so far only — starship combat system designed specifically for role-playing, as opposed to the ship-to-ship boardgame modules previous SFRPGs such as ***Traveller*** or ***Universe*** offered. A definite step ahead.

FASA has produced a fair number of support materials for ***ST:RPG***. Three adventures were released in 1983 — ***The Vanished, Witness for the Defense***, and ***Denial of Destiny***, each offering different adventure possibilities for Federation crews. Two ***Ship Recognition Manuals, The Federation*** and ***The Klingon Empire***, as well as a ***Ship Construction Manual*** for custom

designing your own starships, further expanded the ship-to-ship combat possibilities of the game. And a GM Shield, which added a few previously mentioned but undescribed weapons and a new rule for wide-beam phaser stun, presented the major charts and tables of the game in a convenient, easy-to-use format.

The first major expansion of the ***ST*** rules system appeared in mid-'83: ***Trader Captains and Merchant Princes*** (see capsule review on page 38). It allowed mercantile-minded players to create merchant characters, extended the world-generation system to cover trade and commerce ratings, provided the best interstellar trade rules of *any* game so far (including ***Traveller***), and included guidelines on mapping out areas of space for play. More importantly, it squelched two of the main criticisms some players had of the main game in that ***TC&MP*** allowed for campaign play rather than the episodic play of ***ST:RPG***, and it opened the game to characters who *didn't* have to follow the orders and dictates of Star Fleet Command. The supplement thus allowed players who like to portray the slightly larcenous, roguish character-types so typical of ***Traveller*** and other SFRPGs — the chance to be the Harry Mudds and Cyrano Joneses of the *Star Trek* universe.

For those who like to play characters who are *more* than slightly on the wrong side of the law, 1983 also saw the release of FASA's ***The Klingons*** character generation supplement and sourcebook. This addition to the ***Trek*** series gave players the opportunity to play real baddies by creating Klingon characters. It also further extended ship combat with GM control sheets for both the old and new *Enterprise* and

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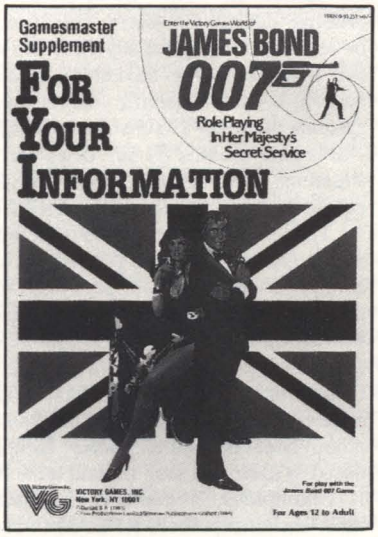

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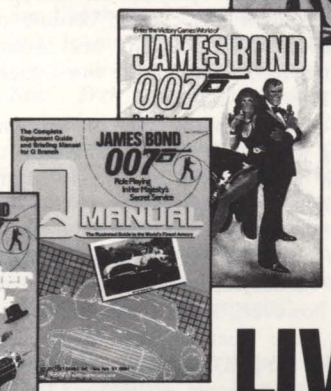

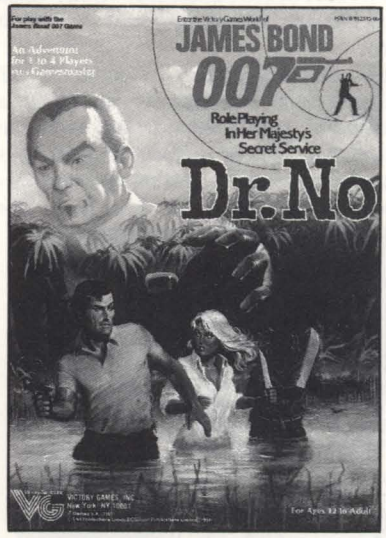

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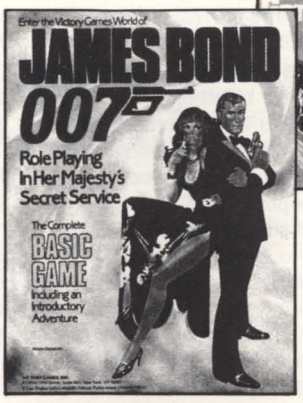
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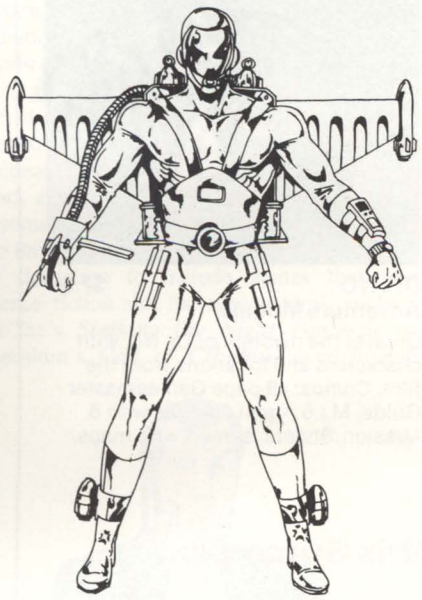
the *Reliant*, and provided a wealth of background information on the Klingon Empire and its relations with the Federation, Romulans and others. Even if one never intended to play a Klingon, the extended information on Klingon politics, history, and culture made this supplement a worthwhile investment for ***Trek*** gamers and GMs. Personally, I didn't care a lot for the concept of the Klingon-human or Klingon-Romulan "fusions" as an explanation for the difference between the Klingons of the TV series and those of the first movie — ideas apparently derived from co-designer John Ford's Klingon novel from Pocket/Timescape. Other than that, I found the supplement excellent material.

FASA has plans for a lot more ***ST*** supplements and expansions, including a revised Basic edition of the rules with an option to attend college to gain increased skills in science and medicine, and an extended starship combat simulator. I see ***Star Trek: The***



Role Playing Game as the front runner for Best Role Playing Game at Origins — or, at the very least, a serious contender.

James Bond 007 was, on the other hand, a serious disappointment to me. I had high expectations, based on the subject matter and the reputations and past credits of its design team. Unfortunately, while the game remains true to its sources in most instances, the game system itself is a disappointing mishmash of overly simple and overly complex rules. For example, damage is figured simply as "light wounds" or "heavy wounds," rather than as specific numbers of points removed from an individual's Hit Points, Constitution or other attribute. This has the effect of making all characters pretty much the same as far as damage-taking ability goes. In contrast, the game sports a bewildering number of charts to which the GM must refer in order to determine success in almost anything, making play much slower and more cumbersome than necessary. A simpler system for determining success in a task, such as rolling dice directly against a character's skill level or attribute score, might have been preferable to the chart system used by the designers of ***007***.

Another sore point in ***007*** was the omission of SPECTRE and the substitution of the colorless TAROT. Obviously this was due to contractual problems over *Thunderball* (the first Bond story in which SPECTRE appeared) and the remake, *Never Say Never Again*. Still, what is Bond without the spectre of SPECTRE hanging over him? TAROT just doesn't make it. Since SPECTRE appeared in other Bond novels and movies, I'd think *something* could have been worked out. If not, I, for one, could have done without a wimpy substitute.

While not what it could have been, the Bond game does have its good points. It does recreate the feel of the movies (if not the novels), and has some nice bits such as the "hero points" that can be used by players to snatch their characters from certain death, just like in the movies. The game's skill list is certainly adequate, and the accompanying ***Q Manual*** is an excellent sourcebook of spy equipment and gadgetry, though it's a bit weak on weapons. The supporting adventures are for the most part well done, though I think the choice of ***Octopussy*** a poor one for an initial adventure, since the movie is so recent a release, and ***Goldfinger*** an unfortunate one, since the movie was recently aired on network TV for the first time in years. Changes in the plot lines of both adventures from those of the movies should throw players off enough, though some might feel cheated because of this. The half-boxes they come in, held in only by the shrinkwrap, represent the worst packaging idea I've seen in years.

In spite of its flaws, the Bond game seems to be selling well locally (though I have yet to see a single game played by anyone in my gaming community). It will probably continue to do well and may very well receive at least a nomination for Best Role Playing Game on the strength of its subject alone. Because of its problems, however, I can't see it winning (though I have been wrong about such predictions in the past). Because of the nature of the Bond movie/novel adventures, I think Victory Games would be advised to stress the game's solo or small group potential with a series of solo adventures similar in nature to the ***Dr. No*** module in the basic rule book. The game's problems would be less noticeable in such a format. And they should definitely branch out from adaptations of the movies into original adventure plots. Otherwise, the game might end up as one of those that sells but is rarely played — an ignominious fate, indeed, for Britain's premier secret agent.

Two other entries in the espionage RPG category were released early in 1983 — Hero Games' ***Espionage*** and Blade/Flying Buffalo's ***Mercenaries, Spies & Private Eyes***. Both were based on already popular game systems — Hero's ***Champions*** and FB's ***Tunnels & Trolls***. Of the two, ***MSPE*** is the more versatile, extending its scope to mercenary and detective/mystery scenarios. I don't find ***Espionage*** overly attractive for the same reasons I prefer other superhero RPGs to ***Champions*** — the system is overly complex in many respects, particularly character generation. I'm not a big fan of character generation systems based on building your own characteristics with a pre-set number of points. (After all, how many of you out there had any say in how strong, intelligent or dextrous you are, aside from what bodybuilding or eating "brain food" could contribute?) So of these two, ***MSPE***, with its elegantly simple, yet complete, game system was the more appealing to me. For gun lovers, the game provided quite an adequate list of firearms (with a few curious omissions). And the section on "The Art of Detection," for crafting detective/mystery scenarios, should be required reading for any GM who wishes to run a mystery-type adventure in *any* game system. While specific mercenary game systems such as FGU's ***Merc*** outshine the "M" part of ***MSPE***, for detective and spy situations, the game should at least be considered a contender for Best RPG of 1983.

The brightest star in the superhero roleplaying category was the revised and expanded edition of Chaosium's ***Superworld***, originally part of that company's now-out-of-print ***Worlds of Wonder*** package. The new edition expands the list of powers to rival that of ***Champions***. The game mechanics have been expanded to allow more action than was available under the initial ***Basic Role-Playing***-based system, yet they remain quite playable. If ***Champions, Villains & Vigilantes***, and other earlier superhero RPGs don't completely satisfy you, you should give ***SW*** a try. ***Superworld*** seems to me to be another contender for 1983's Best RPG at Origins this year. (Of course, my comments about ***Superworld*** should be taken with a grain of salt: I had the opportunity to look over the manuscript, and a few of my suggestions were taken, giving me a contributor's credit for the game.)

Conspicuous by its absence from Chaosium's list of 1983 releases was the RPG version of Larry Niven's *Ringworld*, originally announced for publication last year. Design problems resulting in the reassignment of the design to an in-house team have postponed ***Ringworld*** to sometime this year. In one sense the delay could be seen as unfortunate, since the popularity of Niven's Known Space universe could have made ***Ringworld*** a serious rival to ***Star Trek***'s popularity as a new SF game and as best RPG of the year; but in another way the delay could prove a stroke of good fortune, since now ***Ringworld*** won't have to face ***ST*** in its projected release year of 1984. Maybe we'll see it take some honors at Origins '85.

Another straight SFRPG that saw release late in 1983 was Fantasy Games Unlimited's ***Other Suns***. Though little publicized, ***Other Suns*** is not a bad little game, despite some problems. The game system itself is somewhat simpler than those of most FGU games; its character generation, for instance, bears more similarities to, say, Chaosium's ***Runequest***-based games than to FGU's ***Space Opera***. (Rumor has it that ***Other Suns*** was originally submitted to Chaosium, but withdrawn due to

disagreements over creative control.) The game's main flaws, to my way of thinking, are in its background: Earth is a conquered world, subservient to another, larger empire rather than the hub of a bright, outbound Federation, as in ***Star Trek*** or ***Space Opera***. All right, so maybe I'm a Terran chauvinist, but this *bothers* me. I'm an earthman and I don't like to see my planet under anyone's heel, even relatively benevolent ursinoids as in this case, especially in a game I'm playing. And too many of the "alien" races in ***Other Suns*** are simply anthropomorphized versions of ordinary animals — squirrels, bears, cats, etc. — something we've seen too much of in past RPGs (***Traveller***'s doglike Vargr and leonine Aslan, ***Space Opera***'s feline Mekk-purrs, etc.). While it does have its good points, ***Other Suns***, I'm afraid, is one of those games destined to remain on game store shelves, played only by small groups of dedicated aficionados.

Two other new SFRPG releases in 1983 will probably share the fate of ***Other Suns*** — Alliance Publication's ***Mach: The First Colony*** (see ***Mach*** review on page 37) and Ragnarok Enterprises' ***To Challenge Tomorrow***. The former concerns the descendants of Terran and alien colonists (brought to a new world to escape their planets' destruction) and how they interact in a medieval/technological environment. Ragnarok's entry is an admirable attempt at a "generic" SF/historical role-playing system covering gaming possibilities from the distant past through the far future. Its main problem is that it is *too* ambitious (though thanks to tiny type, the game *does* manage to cover a lot of ground, even if its descriptions of various historic and future eras are, of necessity, somewhat sketchy). Despite its relative obscurity (compared to some of the other new RPGs mentioned), it's just possible ***To Challenge Tomorrow*** might prove to be a dark horse Origins contender, just as Ragnarok's ***Ysgarth*** fantasy RPG was last year.

Other small, somewhat interesting systems, like Valhalla Simulations' ***Outtime*** RPG of alternate timelines, will probably remain obscure. With any luck, obscurity will also be the fate of Yaquinto's ***Timeship***, which, in spite of its time-travel subject matter, falls more into the category of mystic-based fantasy than SF.

But what of the older, established SFRPGs? How did they fare in 1983? In many cases, I fear, not so well. SF games like Gamescience's ***Star Patrol***, for which no supporting material at all was published in 1983, remain in a sort of gaming limbo, selling and being played occasionally, but generally existing out of sight, and out of mind. Other "old favorites" continued to plug away, releasing new supplements and adventures for their select group of fans. FGU's ***Space Opera*** pretty much went this route, releasing a couple of *Star Sector Atlases* and several adventures during the year. Ironically, while the general themes and ideas explored in most of the ***SO*** adventures — espionage, interstellar crime, etc. — are far more interesting and innovative than those presented in the average ***Traveller*** adventure, ***SO*** scenarios don't seem to sell very well, sitting on game store shelves for months on end. The only big seller I've noted locally was a recent ***Galactic Casino*** adventure. This is too bad. GMs of other SFRPGs would find a lot of ideas ripe for conversion to their own systems in the ***Space Opera*** adventures. ***Traveller*** refs who tire of fighting megacorporations or the like would be advised to check some of these out. Even ***Star Trek*** GMs, especially those who run Merchant campaigns (for which no published adventures have yet been released) could pick up some tips from the similar Federation-based gaming situations of ***Space Opera***.

TSR, which entered the SFRPG field in 1982 with ***Star Frontiers***, answered criticisms of that game's extremely limited star travel and nonexistent starship combat systems with its ***Knight Hawks*** game expansion. ***Knight Hawks*** provided a starship travel/combat/construction system with a vengeance, being nearly as extensive in itself as the original game. And like all TSR products, it was excellently packaged and contained a fair amount of "extras" — maps, deck plans, scenario book, counters, etc. It contained adequate rules for cargo consignment; brief — but among the most extensive so far released — rules on mining and prospecting; a starship construction system more complex than ***Star Trek***'s but less so than ***Traveller***'s ***High Guard*** and about equal to its basic ship construction rules; and a starship combat boardgame for actual ship-to-ship situations. This last is ***Knight Hawks***' main flaw, for its ship-to-ship actions are, like those of ***Traveller*** and other SFRPGs, boardgame-based rather than designed specifically for role playing, as is the case in ***Star Trek***'s console-based system. This probably won't deter those who have embraced ***Star Frontiers*** as their main SF game — and it has apparently picked up a fair following among the younger set — or bother those who like boardgames. I doubt, however, that ***Knight Hawks*** will entice any devotees of other SFRPGs to switch any more than ***Star Frontiers*** itself did, especially with ***Star Trek*** in the running.

In the after-the-holocaust category, TSR finally released its long-promised revised ***Gamma World*** science fantasy RPG of mutants stalking the radioactive wastes of 25th-century America. And Timeline offered a role-playing supplement for its ***Morrow Project*** game system, adding character skills to the game, along with some interesting adventures. Each ***MP*** adventure serves to expand the game with new weapons, armor, and hit tables for the various vehicles, etc. Though lacking in support material (*nothing* appeared for the game from Origins '83 on) ***Morrow Project*** continues to be the classiest after-the-holocaust RPG yet released in what is still a limited field.

At this point, it is worth mentioning Firebird Ltd.'s *The Armory*, by one of ***Morrow Project***'s original designers, Kevin Dockery. *The Armory* is a book of weapons that can be converted into ***MP*** — or other — game terms. As it stands, it is *not* designed for use with any specific system; future editions will be specifically designed for use with ***Espionage***, since a tie-in with *some* game system seemed desirable. The wealth of modern firearms in Dockery's book makes it a must for players of any system who wish to expand their firearms lists and need weapon specifications to make the conversions.

Missing from the roster of 1983 releases were any expansions or supporting materials for Tri-Tac's ***FTL:2448*** SF system or ***Fringeworthy*** interdimensional travel RPG. However, new editions of both games are in the works, and Tri-Tac's supernatural/technological ***Stalking the Night Fantastic*** RPG, which uses the same basic game system and mechanics as the other two, introduced a number of improvements and updates to the system.

Perhaps the biggest disappointment to SF gamers was the state of ***Traveller*** in 1983. The year kicked off with ***Starter Traveller***, which received accolades from various quarters (including, incredibly, an award for *originality* at

the Hobby Industry of America show early last year), yet was essentially a simplified rehash of ***The Traveller Book*** released the summer before. And ***The Traveller Book*** itself was a minor revision/expansion of the second-edition ***Traveller*** rules that appeared in ***Deluxe Traveller*** the year before that! Although ***Starter Traveller*** was thus the *third* revision of the system in a two-year span, the only significant change was in the starship rules, which greatly simplified the original miniatures-based rules with their vector-movement system (a system I never once saw used in actual play).

Unfortunately, the major inanities in the ***Traveller*** combat system — armor protecting you *from being* hit instead of *after* you're hit, etc. — remained intact in this latest incarnation. While I'd purchased the earlier revisions, I drew the line here.

The second major note of discord in the ***Traveller*** corner came when FASA announced it was dropping its ***Traveller*** line. The decision

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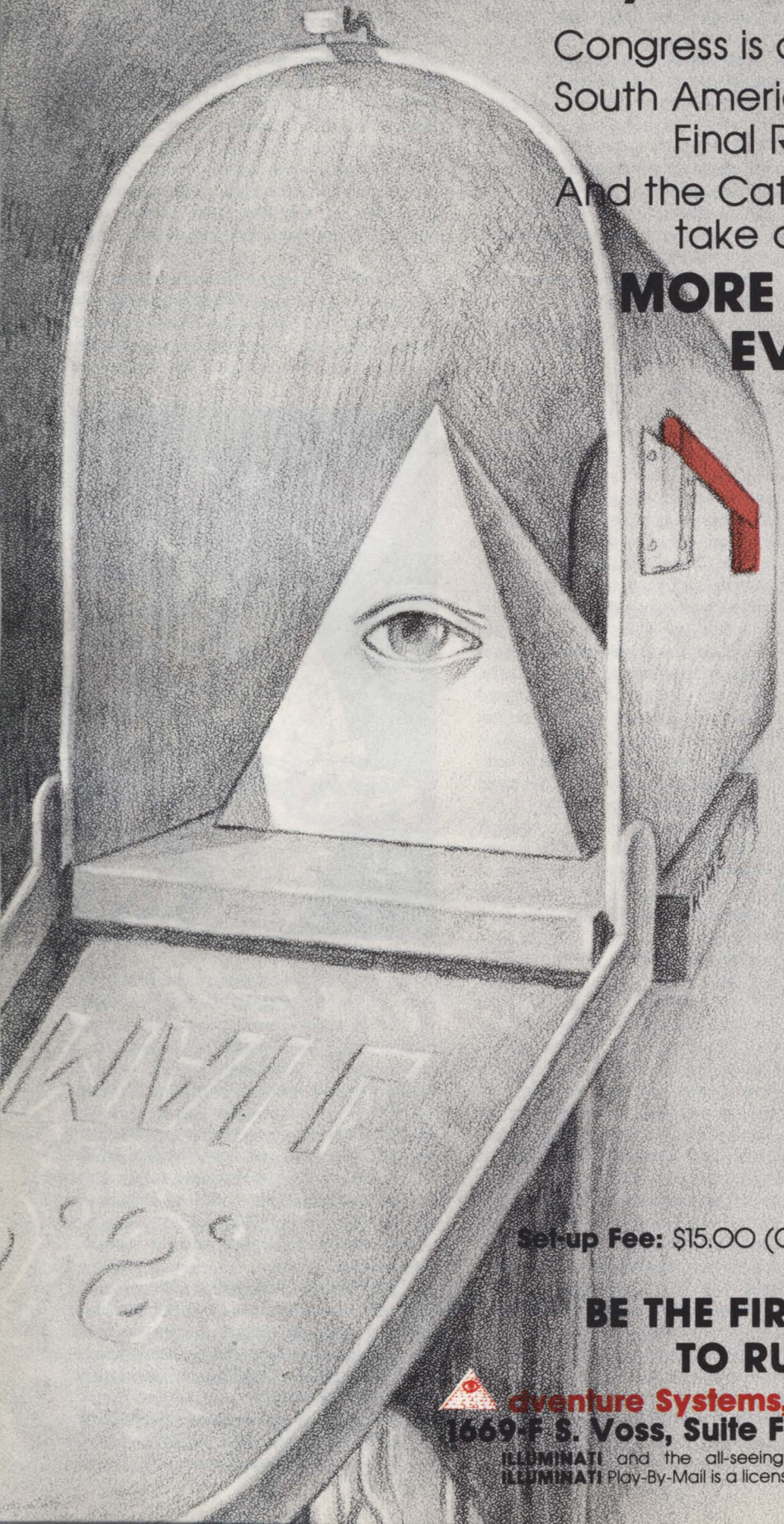

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was apparently due to problems with GDW in getting several adventures and supplements approved, coupled with the prospect of greater financial returns on the newly-released ***Star Trek*** RPG than on any further ***Traveller*** products.

The list of GDW's own ***Traveller*** products for 1983 is not illustrious. The only full-length adventure (other than the boxed ***Tarsus***, which was billed as being for use with the ***Starter*** set) was the Keith brothers' ***Nomad of the World Ocean***. While the water world and its denizens featured in the adventure were fascinating, the plot was somewhat weak — not the best I've seen from the talented brothers Keith (though still better than several other ***Traveller*** offerings). The two supplements released in 1983, ***Forms and Charts*** and ***Veterans***, were next to useless unless (a) you'd never seen any of the reprints from other GDW publications or you actually felt you needed a *chart* to write up such things as animal encounter tables or how much equipment you carried; or (b) you'd rather pick mercenary NPCs or player-characters from a book than create your own. Neither supplement was anywhere near spectacular.

Toward the end of 1983, GDW made what was probably its wisest move by releasing Book 6, ***Scouts*** — the long-awaited expansion for the scout service. The character-generation system was all right, for the most part, but made college undesirable by denying college grads the option of joining the branch of the scouts that actually flew the ships, sticking them with administrative duties. The new skills, too, were of limited use (Naval Architecture for one — how many *scouts* are going to be designing ships?) All in all, one would be just as well off — better, in some instances — sticking with Paranoia Press' ***Scouts and Assassins***. The expanded stellar and planetary system generation rules in Book 6 were a nightmare of complexity — more so than even ***Space Opera***'s. To reach simple information of potential use or interest to gaming parties, one must first generate such obscure items as a star's bolometric magnitude (How many people *know* what bolometric magnitude is — how many *care*?) — not something that's going to mean a lot in play to most gamers. At least ***Scouts*** did finally see the light of day, though I think GDW would have been better advised letting the Keiths handle this one. Other promised items, such as the highly touted ***Traveller Adventure***, which had to go through several rewrites by Andy Keith and others before it was publishable, never did make it out in 1983.

One bright spot on the ***Traveller*** horizon came with a new series of licensed supplements and adventures from Gamelords (why is it the best ***Traveller*** items are *still* coming from licensees?). Gamelords' ***Lee's Guide to Interstellar Space***, a book of short adventure situations a referee could build into complete scenarios, was not overly inventive, but still beat GDW offerings in a similar vein, such as ***76 Patrons***, hands down. Andy Keith's ***The Undersea Environment*** supplement for adventuring underwater was probably the most innovative, useful ***Traveller*** item released all year, especially in the light of supplements such as ***Forms and Charts*** and ***Veterans***. Adventures released by Gamelords also outshone recent GDW offerings, making Gamelords the company to watch in the future for ***Traveller*** items. (I can only hope they don't meet a fate similar to Paranoia and FASA; with Andy Keith their main contributor, perhaps they will be spared, since he is also GDW's most creative outside designer. One can only hope so, for the sake of those who remain loyal to the ***Traveller*** system in spite of newer, better systems now available.)

Those were some of the high — and low — points of science fiction role-playing in 1983, from the bright new contender, ***Star Trek: The Role-Playing Game***, to the ailing but still-hanging-in-there champ, ***Traveller***. When it comes to the awards at this year's Origins, I predict ***Star Trek*** will be the winner. Competition may come from ***Superworld, MSPE***, or any of several dark horse SF or FRPGs released last year — perhaps even ***James Bond 007*** if enough voters ignore its flaws. Still, I will personally be very surprised if the obvious choice — ***Star Trek*** — is passed by for top honors. Of course, I've been surprised in the past by some award choices, and anything can happen in the final analysis. Whatever happens at Origins. I'm certain 1983 will be remembered as a "fascinating" year for science fiction role-playing games. **SG**

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Berserkers and Apples

Wings Out of Shadow

Review by John D. Burtt

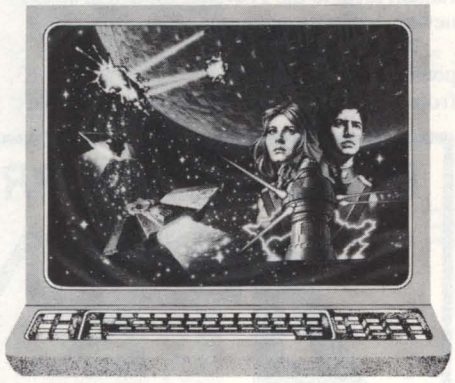
To date, computer games have fallen into two separate categories — Arcade games, testing hand-eye coordination and reflexes; and Strategic games, testing logic and thought processes. Now, a new genre — the computer game story — is being launched by science fiction writer Fred Saberhagen and SF editor Jim Baen.

Wings Out of Shadow (produced by Joan and Fred Saberhagen and Berserker Works, Ltd. and released through Baen Software) takes four separate games — both arcade and strategic — and weaves them into the fabric of a short story, with each game affecting the ones following it. While many computer game players prefer arcade games to strategic games (or vice versa), players of ***Wings Out of Shadow*** will find the package an exciting innovation.

Wings, named for a Saberhagen short story, plays out the tale of the *Hope*, a hospital ship, its escort, the carrier *Judith*, and the *Judith*'s outnumbered complement of nine fighters. The *Hope* carries survivors of an attack on the planet Yaty by the dread berserkers — deadly automated warships. Humanity, cryogenically preserved aboard the hospital ship, flees into the Taynarus nebula in an attempt to escape, but the berserkers give chase. The object of the four-part game is to get the *Hope* to safety and destroy as many berserkers as possible. It isn't easy, but it's certainly fun and challenging.

The game opens with a movie-style credit sequence, featuring some very attractive animated graphics, and a list of game credits. Joan Saberhagen is listed as Programming Director; Scott V. Walker acted as Programming Coordinator. Each of the four games which makes up the sum of ***Wings Out of Shadow*** was designed by a different programmer.

The first part of the game — called "Pulpit" — is a simple arcade challenge, designed by Dennis L. Martinez and Mary Martinez. The game represents a dream-like single combat between the player and a computer-controlled dragon. The object is to get across an array of squares, pick up a shield and cleaver along the way, and kill the dragon. The problem is that randomly-appearing teeth flicker into the array. If the figure and teeth show up in the same square, the figure is eaten. Every time the teeth score, the figure has to start the journey over and one of the *Judith*'s fighters is damaged (which affects the player's strength in the second game that makes up ***Wings Out of Shadow***). "Pulpit" features excellent graphics, but only the youngest players will find the game holding their interest very long.



"The Bridge," a strategic game designed by Michael L. Carpenter, comes next. The player works from a menu-driven series of screens (none of which feature any graphics to speak of). The idea is to use the *Judith* and her fighters to draw off or engage pursuing berserkers so the *Hope* can flee to safety. The fighters are rated for Drives, Weapons, Shields, and Life Support. Each of these characteristics changes as a result of movement and combat, and the *Judith* has the capacity to refit some (but not enough) damaged fighters. There are 12 pilots available for the fighters, each rated for Experience, Endurance, Reflexes, and Stability. These characteristics affect the pilots' performance in battle.

The berserkers follow their own set of pregenerated orders which change with every game. Once the player finishes giving orders, there is nothing to do but switch back and forth between the various screens. On one screen you can watch the various forces move and, if necessary, engage in combat; on another, messages, sometimes erroneous, crawl across the screen as the *Judith* and her fighters move toward the sectors to which they have been ordered. Movement can be slowed by "atomic storms." Combat, a free-for-all shoot-em-up, takes place if opposing forces share a sector at the end of a movement phase.

Once combat ends, control of the game returns to the player, who initiates a scan of the nebula to locate his ships and the berserkers. He can then assess the damage done to his fighters and issue new orders: new moves, refits (repairs), change of pilots, etc. Then a new round begins. The "Bridge" game continues until one of three things happens: The *Hope* arrives at its destination; the *Hope* is destroyed; or the *Judith* is attacked and boarded.

"The Bridge" can be frustrating for several reasons: First is the "no control" aspect of the game. Once orders have been entered, the player has nothing to do, and watching messages crawl across the screen can be dull. A graphic view of the quadrants, showing movement and combat, might have been better. The Saberhagens say they tried to incorporate graphics but were not satisfied with the results of such an approach. A second source of frustration is that you are never given any real indication of what strategies will work and which won't. You aren't told how the pilots' ratings affect combat, for example, so assigning them is guesswork, at least at first, and deciphering the results of your choices is tough.

"The Bridge" game is very tough to win outright — the only straight win I've heard of was by Fred Saberhagen himself (after how many losses, one wonders?). In my first game, I sent nine fighters after four berserkers. The result was four dead berserkers and nine shot-up fighters, and the refit capabilities of the *Judith* are too limited to be much help. Outnumbering the enemy machines is a good, but costly, way to kill them. The odds are against the *Judith*, so be prepared.

The third game — "The Maze" — was designed by Eddie Goldeberger. It is triggered at the end of "The Bridge" game when berserkers board the *Judith* (which is something of an inevitability). In order to win this phase of ***Wings Out of Shadow***, the player must get from the bridge to a hangar two levels away. The object is to reach one last fighter housed in the hangar. In addition, the player would be well-advised to prepare for the fourth and final phase of the game by stopping at his cabin to pick up one of four experimental modules for the fighter. Without a module, the successful completion of the final game is quite difficult.

"The Maze" is just what its name makes it sound like: a three-dimensional, real-time trip through a frustrating, three-level maze. No map of the Maze is provided, and the graphics show only walls and doors, all of which look a lot alike. The Maze is always the same, however, so games become progressively easier. Complicating matters is the presence of berserker robots in the Maze. The berserkers try to shoot you; two shots, and you're dead. You get no warning of a berserker's presence (according to Saberhagen, they run quietly on rubber wheels) unless you see it before it sees you. This game is deadly! Maze lovers will enjoy the mapping process, if not the berserkers' attacks. Younger players may have a little trouble with the look-alike walls.

If "The Maze" is traversed successfully and the hangar reached, "The Last Battle," designed by Scott V. Walker, begins. In this pure arcade shoot-em-up you launch your

fighter and do battle with the remaining berserkers until they're defeated . . . or your lasers give out! Again, the graphics are outstanding: a first-person, animated, cockpit view shows a moving starfield, crosshairs for aiming, and displays for ship systems and quadrant information.

Trigger-happy players will exhaust their lasers very early in "The Last Battle" and end up wandering around, waiting for the berserkers to pierce their shields and destroy their life support systems — a very tedious and tiring wait indeed. An experimental module — if picked up during "The Maze" game — improves performance in the final game immeasurably.

(It's worth noting that "The Maze" is deadly enough to make it likely that many players would never even reach "The Last Battle." For that reason, ***Wings Out of Shadow*** includes a "saved" version of the final phase so it can be played even if you lose the previous games.)

Analyzing each phase individually: "The Pulpit" quickly becomes tiring, something you have to go through to get to the rest of the game. "The Bridge" will keep most people busy and interested a bit longer, as they try to discover the tactics that will save the *Hope*. "The Maze" will be challenging at first, becoming less so as the Maze is mapped, and then it's pure chance each time you play — will the berserkers get you or not? "The Last Battle" takes quite a bit of time and skill (and a module) to master.

As already noted, performance in each phase of the game determines the set-up (and, thus, a player's performance) in subsequent phases. Doing well in "The Pulpit" game, for example, gives the player fewer berserkers to fight in "The Bridge" game. Another example: The particular module chosen in "The Maze" game (if a module is selected at all) changes some of the graphic elements of "The Last Battle" game; in addition, the module selected in "The Maze" affects potential performance in phase four. This alone sets ***Wings*** apart from the majority of computer games.

In addition to being linked by the player's performance in each phase, the four games making up ***Wings*** are linked by text segments which appear between each of the phases. These narrative segments can change each time the game is played, depending upon the actions of the player! The story, which grows out of interaction between the player and the computer program, offers clues which can improve play.

Overall, I have a very positive feeling about ***Wings Out of Shadow***, despite some minor reservations about particular portions of the game. Each phase of the game meshes with the next, so the game flows naturally and smoothly from phase to phase. The ways in which ***Wings Out of Shadow***'s four game phases interrelate and the unique form of storytelling represented by the text segments bring new meaning to the expression "interactive fiction." The programmers involved in this project did a very impressive job. ***Wings Out of Shadow*** is a good start for the Saberhagens, Berserker Works, Ltd., Baen Software, and, perhaps, a whole new genre of computer game.

"*Wings Out of Shadow* segues hypnotically from reflex action to strategy and tactics to adventure to arcade excitement. Success depends not just upon one ability — you must succeed on every level: you must become one with your machine."
—Baen Software

Wings Out of Shadow (Baen Enterprises, 8 West 36th St., New York, NY 10018); for Apple IIe and Apple II+. 48K disk. Game disk and six-page player's manual. One player; playing time 30 minutes to several hours.

SG

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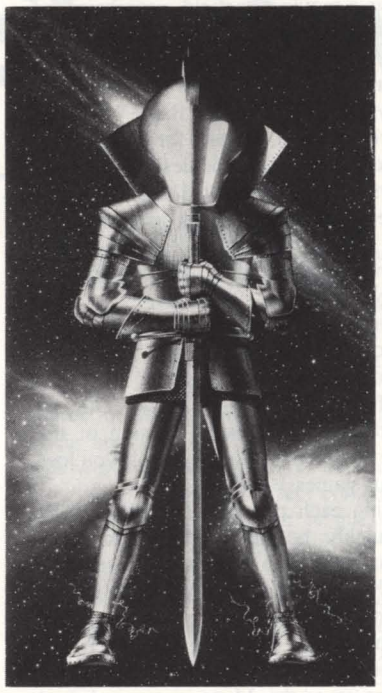
Another Novel Game from Mayfair

The Forever War



Featured Review by Ed Rotondaro

The Forever War from Mayfair Games Inc. is one of several games published by that company based on popular science fiction or fantasy novels. In this case, Joe Haldeman's Hugo award-winning novel of the infantry in future millennia has been turned into a game of tactical squad-level combat. The question arises, "Does a good science fiction novel make a good science fiction game?" The answer, in this case, is "Yes."

TFW depicts the battles of the United Nations Expeditionary force as witnessed by the novel's hero, Major William Mandella. The game includes all the battles described in the book, including some that are only mentioned in passing. Excerpts from the novel, used to introduce various sections of the rules, are a nice addition to the game. Also included in the rulebook is a short essay — by Haldeman himself — on the parallels between Vietnam and *TFW*.

The game's physical components are superb. The map — thick puzzle-cut cardboard — can be arranged in a variety of ways. The counters are sturdy half-inch squares of glossy cardboard. The rulebook has perforated pages so charts and scenarios can be easily removed.

The game depicts combat between Human forces and those of the alien Tauran race. The battlesites are frigid, airless "portal planets" — planets crucial to the control of interstellar space. An interesting twist on standard science fiction boardgaming is included in the form of rules which take into account the effect on combat of near-light-speed travel. For attackers traveling at great speed, weeks or months may pass while all around them, a decade or more might creep by. Upon landing, the attackers can find themselves up against a force which has used the intervening years to develop devastating high-tech weaponry.

The idea is incorporated into a game whose mechanics are, generally, straightforward. First, one of the game's 12 scenarios (or a scenario of the player's own design) is chosen. Combat units are selected as required by the scenario rules. On the first turn only, the attacker launches drone attacks (when drones are included in a scenario's set-up instructions). Subsequent turns are resolved in a series of Attacker phases followed by a series of Defender phases. The Attacker first attempts to rally pinned combat units, checks to see if fighters enter the board (where applicable), rallies pinned units, moves all units, and conducts combat. This is then repeated, with the defending player going through the same steps; this means there are two combat phases per turn, and since all attacks are considered simultaneous, casualties among the troops mount rapidly.

Counters and Combat

The Forever War makes use of only a handful of different troop types. The Humans have three types of units: Echelon troops (the weakest units in the game), regular infantry, and individual officers (identified by name as characters from the novel). Echelon and regular troops are standard combat troops, familiar to most wargamers. The main function of officers is to help rally "pinned" units. A PIN result on the Combat Results Table means the affected unit cannot move or fight until it has been rallied (on a roll of 1-3 on a six-sided die). Officers have a printed morale bonus which is subtracted from the roll for rallying. The Taurans are all clones, and thus have identical combat values.

There are two types of combat in *The Forever War*: Fire combat and Melee combat. Fire — or ranged — combat takes place among units in different hexes; Melee combat takes place among units in the same hex. To reflect the violence of close-range combat — often involving lasers and other high-tech weapons — melee attacks are resolved at higher odds than ranged attacks. Odds are first calculated by figuring the ratio of attackers to defenders. These "normal" odds are then shifted up one column on the Combat Results Table. Thus, for example, an attack which results in 2-1 combat odds is resolved at 3-1 odds in Melee combat.

In Fire combat, odds are figured normally, with no CRT shifts. In order to beef up the firepower of units engaged in ranged attacks, *TFW* includes an assortment of carried weapons (like heavy lasers, grenade launchers, and tachyon rocket launchers), available at different tech levels. Grenades and tachyon rockets are "blast weapons" which equally affect all units in a target hex; that makes it risky to stack units. Such weapons also destroy any weapons carried by affected units. Beam weapons (lasers and the like) do not destroy carried weapons.

Other interesting weapons available to players are Drones, Tower Lasers, Globe Projectors, and Fighters. Drones are one-shot weapons effective only against Tower Lasers and Globe Projectors. The Towers and Projectors themselves are used to defend bases. Their main advantages are a high attack

strength and great range. Their height also ensures that they are unaffected by Line of Sight rules and restrictions. Fighters, used as tactical air support, are available in some of the scenarios. Fighters attack by strafing an entire row of map hexes at 1–2 odds. The target's defensive strength has no effect on combat.)

In addition to the offensive weapons described above, ***The Forever War*** includes two types of fortifications — large and small bunkers. A large bunker holds up to three troop counters, a small bunker holds only one. Bunkers add to the defensive value of the troops inside them, as well as adding to the range at which they can fire (presumably by providing a secure place, with relatively few distractions, from which to fire).

Stasis Field

Also available to the defender in certain scenarios is a "stasis field." This device, which affects only the hex in which it is placed, doesn't allow anything to move faster than 16.3 meters per second (about 36 miles per hour). Most modern weapons (and *all* energy weapons) are unusable within the field, so combat involves weapons such as swords, spears, bows, and axes. All troop and officer counters are backprinted to indicate their values in the stasis field.

Once the field is activated, all of the defender's units must enter the hex in which the field is located. At this point, the game scale changes. The puzzle-like pieces of the mapboard are rearranged so that a gray line printed on the map forms a megahex (21 hexes in diameter), representing the hex in which the stasis field generator is located. Neither side can leave the megahex until the stasis field generator is destroyed, or one side defeats the other.

The stasis field, included primarily to simulate the final battle in the book, represents a weak spot in the game's design. The rules are unclear about when the defender is allowed to activate the field. A certain number of casualties must be suffered before the field can be activated. But can it be activated before the attacker moves or fires, or do you have to wait until the defender's turn? The players need a concrete answer.

In addition to having to deal with opposing forces and high-tech weaponry, Humans and Taurans must deal with the hostile terrain of the portal planet battlegrounds. The portal planets feature mountains, fissures, craters, lava plains, and hydrogen ice pools. Lava plains are treated as clear ground; mountains, fissures, and craters limit movement, while increasing a unit's defense factor; ice pools allow rapid movement, but there is a risk involved. If a unit is pinned on the ice during combat, it is eliminated. (This is because battlesuits generate heat, and any contact with the unstable, icy surface will cause an explosion. This feature is right out of the novel, and adds an element of risk and "authenticity" to the game.)

Tech Levels

One of the most innovative aspects of both the novel and game versions of ***The Forever War*** is the consideration given to the effect of relativistic speeds on warfare. A potential attacker might experience the passage of months (and, consequently, experience little in the way of technological advancement) while an enemy might have decades of real-time to prepare for the invasion (and to develop higher-tech weapons than their attackers). ***TFW*** isn't the first game to consider this — Metagaming used tech level differences in their microgame, ***Warpwar*** — but I prefer the way Mayfair has chosen to simulate the situation.

Each scenario offers players a choice of several different "forces," or combinations of combat units. Each combination represents a different Tech Level. In secret, the players select the force and Tech Level with which they will attack or defend. Chits which represent the selected forces (but do not reveal the Tech Level of the forces they represent) are used in place of the actual combat unit pieces until combat occurs. Once the opposing forces have confronted each other, the Tech Levels are revealed to both sides.

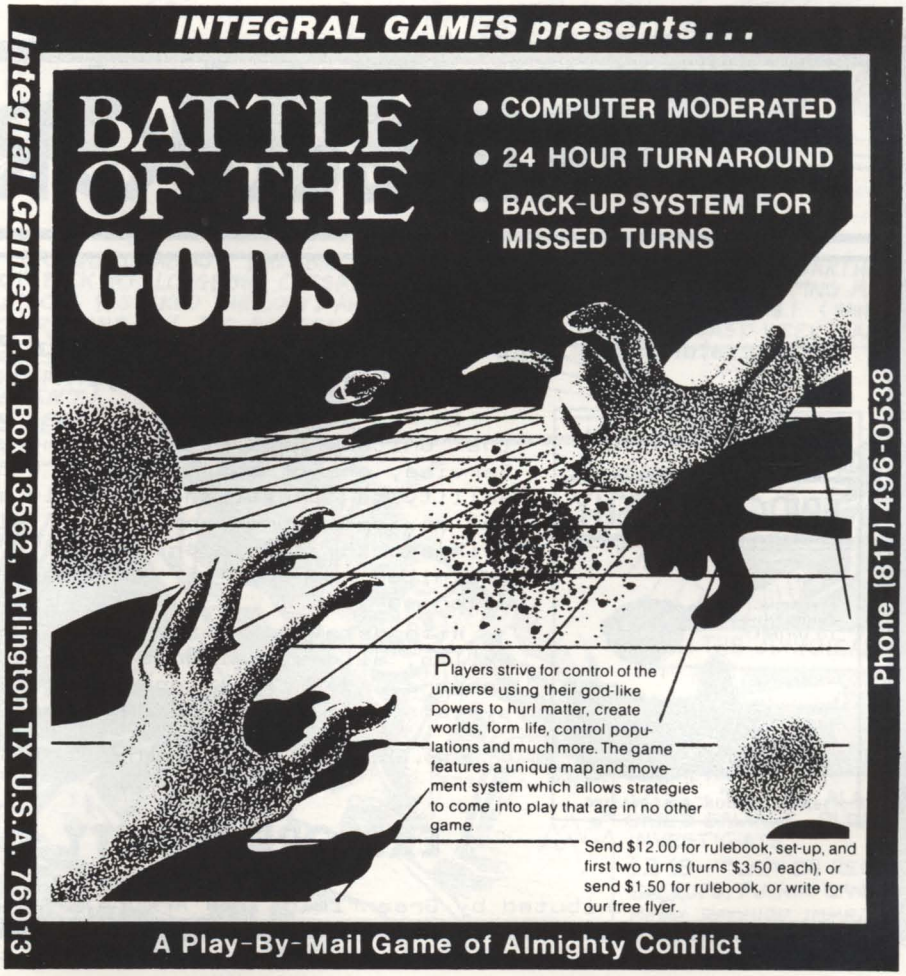
Players should be prepared for nasty surprises as combat begins because only then can they learn whether their foes are at a higher Tech Level than they are! Tech Levels are of major importance in combat situations: The same odds shift used in determining the final odds in a melee attack is used in determining all combat odds between forces at different Tech Levels. Units attacking at a higher Tech Level than the opponents' shift to the right on the CRT, one column per level of difference. Attacking with a force several Tech Levels higher than an opponent can be devastating.

Besides the odds shift in combat, forces at the higher Tech Levels have more advanced weapons from which to choose. Balancing superior firepower and increased deadliness of the higher Tech Level forces is the fact that they are usually smaller than lower Tech Level forces.

Strategy

As a tactical game, ***TFW*** presents players with a variety of problems. First of all, there are differences between Human and Tauran units. In most cases, Human units and weapons have greater attack, defense, and range values than their Tauran counterparts. This reflects the fact that, in the words of Joe Haldeman, the Taurans "had to re-discover warfare, and never really got good at it."

The Human player can take advantage of superior range and defense factors, at least at the beginning of the game. Human units can engage their foes at least one turn before they come under fire and force their opponents to attack at less than favorable odds, or else use more units in fewer attacks. As a defensive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measure, the Human forces should organize into heavy weapon squads (with carried weapons) and support units. Avoid stacking more than two squads unless they are in a bunker. This organization leaves Humans less vulnerable to blast weapons, and presents a lot of targets among which the Taurans must spread their fire.

The Taurans have only one real advantage — they generally outnumber Humans. This numerical advantage can be utilized by trying to outflank Human units; this is particularly important if the Humans are obstructed from the Taurans' line of sight. Again, the Tauran player doesn't want to stack too many units together. Units should, however, be kept close enough to one another to enable them to link up for attacks in which good odds are needed.

The Tauran player is advised to knock out the Humans' carried weapons as soon as possible. This will cause the opposing forces to come to grips in melee, rather than duel at long range. With their numerical superiority, the increased deadliness of melee combat can help the Taurans because they can afford to sacrifice units in attacks at unfavorable odds and the melee combat odds shift will help them destroy their foes.

Looming over all tactical considerations are the problems posed by the interaction of forces at different Tech Levels. A high-tech force can really mop up on a low-tech force, but it must do so rapidly — before the low-tech force can use its numerical superiority to whittle down the technologically superior force. Remember that defensive strength is not boosted by Tech Level — only offensive capability is affected. This, in combination with the relatively small size of most high-tech forces, makes them vulnerable to repeated attacks. Low-tech forces must subject higher-tech opponents to repeated attacks during the course of a game.

Another factor to consider before play begins is that several scenarios give players the choice of more than one force from a given Tech Level; one force may have few troops and more carried weapons, while the other choice may offer superior numbers at the cost of lost firepower. This forces players to make some interesting decisions: Carried weapons add to your killing power, but players who opt for superior firepower end up concentrating this power in the hands of a small number of troops. If weapons are destroyed by blast fire, or the units carrying them are destroyed (and you are unable to retrieve the weapons) you're up a creek without a paddle. And weapons add nothing to a force's defensive capabilities (as would superior numbers); they only cause players to give up valuable troops for potentially ineffective firepower.

The Forever War includes 12 scenarios, most of which are designed for two players. Two of the scenarios are for use with groups of four or six players. One solitaire scenario is also included. In it, the Human player has to knock out an abandoned Tauran base. (The base's defenses are automatic, so no opponent is required.) Provisions — in the form of unit point values — are also included for player-designed scenarios.

TFW is not without its flaws. The biggest problem with the game is that there are no concrete victory conditions. Players are told to take and hold, or defend, a base. What does this mean? Kill all the defenders and destroy their bunkers? If a handful of defenders survive, does that mean they held the base even though the bunkers and Tower Lasers were destroyed? ***TFW*** needs a system of graduated victory conditions. Marginal, tactical, and decisive victories should be possible.

I also don't like the rule for fighters which requires a die roll on each turn (and a 6 at that!) before a fighter appears on the board. This is supposed to represent the fact that the fighter's primary duty is to defend the cruiser which brought the combatants to the planet. It would seem logical that the fighter, having appeared once, would be more likely to return on subsequent turns.

Despite the flaws mentioned above, I thoroughly enjoyed ***The Forever War***. The game plays fast, and really captures the spirit of the novel upon which it is based. Mayfair has a winner here and gamers who buy it will get their money's worth.

THE FOREVER WAR *(Mayfair Games); $17.00. Designed by James Griffin. Components include a 15-page rulebook; 10 scenarios; 252 die-cut counters; mounted, puzzle-cut, semi-geomorphic mapboards; and two six-sided dice; boxed. Two to four players; playing time 30 to 90 minutes. Published 1983.* **SG**

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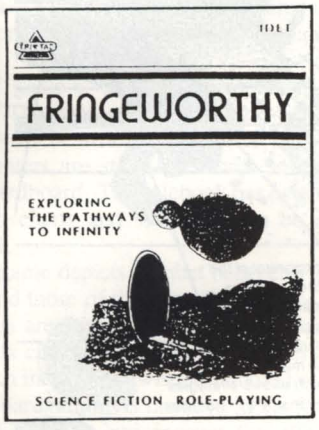

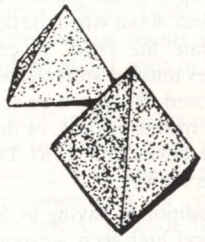

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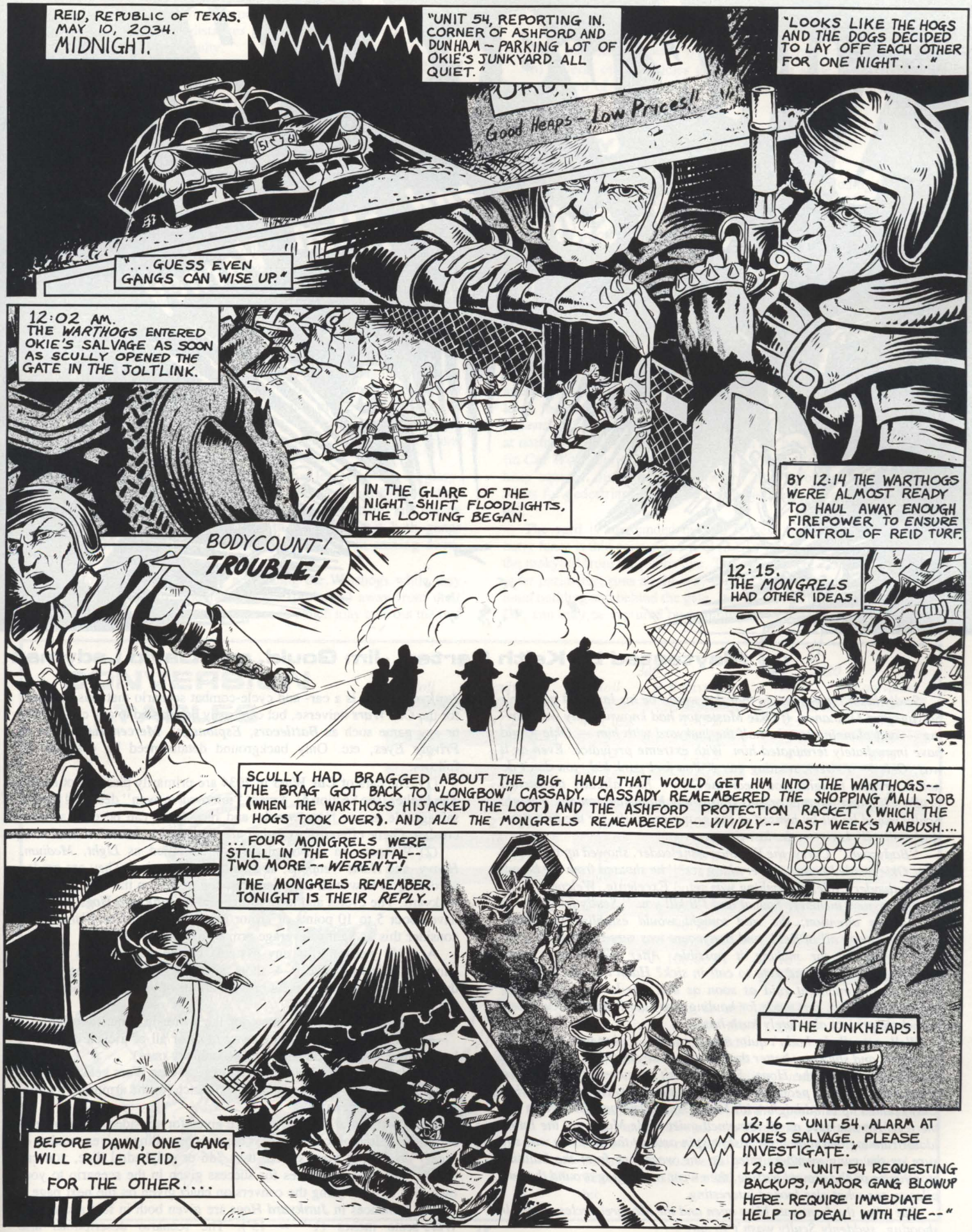
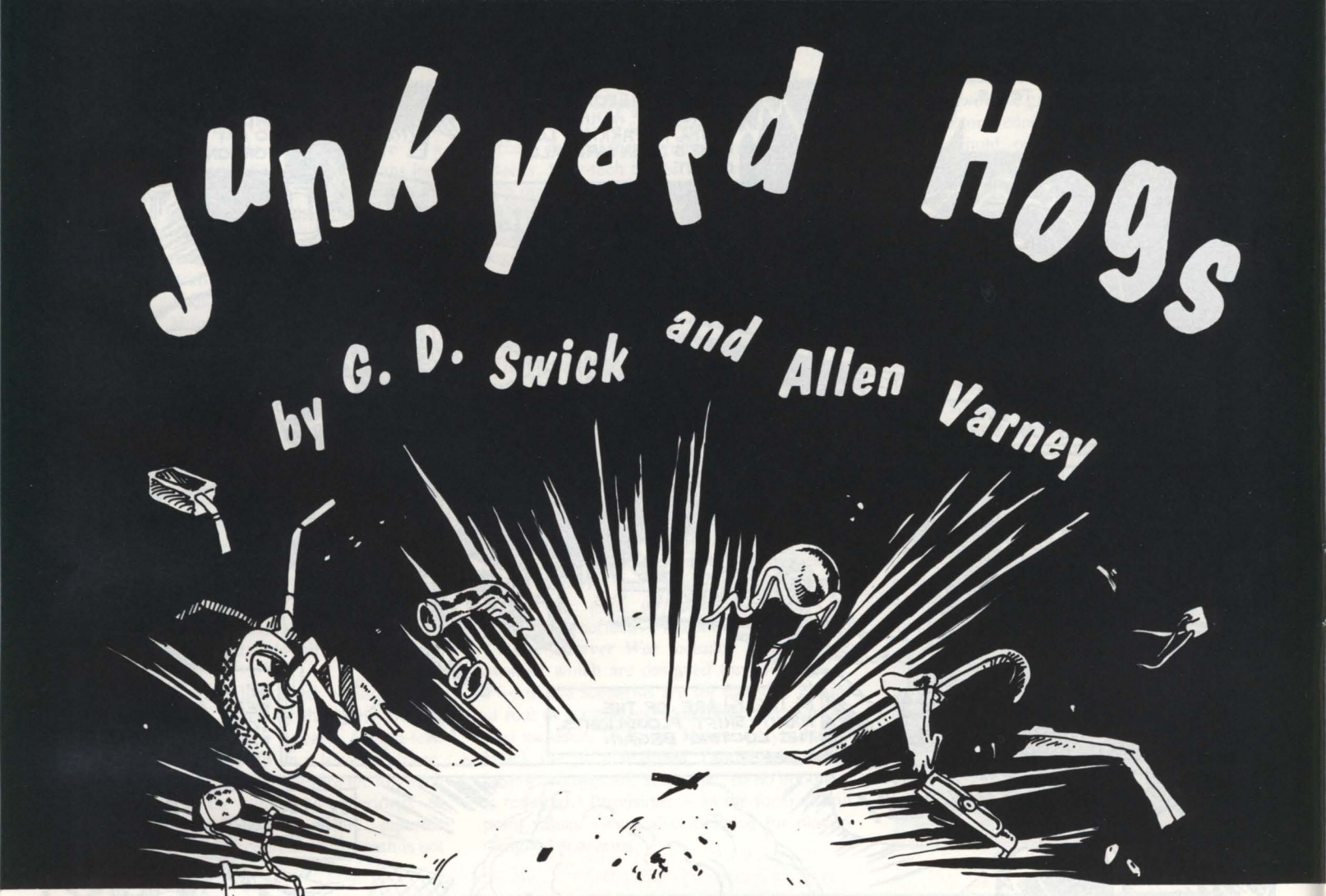

REID, REPUBLIC OF TEXAS. MAY 10, 2034. MIDNIGHT.
"UNIT 54, REPORTING IN. CORNER OF ASHFORD AND DUNHAM – PARKING LOT OF OKIE'S JUNKYARD. ALL QUIET."
"LOOKS LIKE THE HOGS AND THE DOGS DECIDED TO LAY OFF EACH OTHER FOR ONE NIGHT...."
Good Heaps – Low Prices!!
"...GUESS EVEN GANGS CAN WISE UP."
12:02 AM. THE WARTHOGS ENTERED OKIE'S SALVAGE AS SOON AS SCULLY OPENED THE GATE IN THE JOLTLINK.
IN THE GLARE OF THE NIGHT-SHIFT FLOODLIGHTS, THE LOOTING BEGAN.
BY 12:14 THE WARTHOGS WERE ALMOST READY TO HAUL AWAY ENOUGH FIREPOWER TO ENSURE CONTROL OF REID TURF.
BODYCOUNT! TROUBLE!
12:15. THE MONGRELS HAD OTHER IDEAS.
SCULLY HAD BRAGGED ABOUT THE BIG HAUL THAT WOULD GET HIM INTO THE WARTHOGS-- THE BRAG GOT BACK TO "LONGBOW" CASSADY. CASSADY REMEMBERED THE SHOPPING MALL JOB (WHEN THE WARTHOGS HIJACKED THE LOOT) AND THE ASHFORD PROTECTION RACKET (WHICH THE HOGS TOOK OVER). AND ALL THE MONGRELS REMEMBERED -- VIVIDLY-- LAST WEEK'S AMBUSH....
...FOUR MONGRELS WERE STILL IN THE HOSPITAL-- TWO MORE -- WEREN'T!
THE MONGRELS REMEMBER. TONIGHT IS THEIR REPLY.
...THE JUNKHEAPS.
BEFORE DAWN, ONE GANG WILL RULE REID.
FOR THE OTHER....
12:16 – "UNIT 54, ALARM AT OKIE'S SALVAGE. PLEASE INVESTIGATE."
12:18 – "UNIT 54 REQUESTING BACKUPS, MAJOR GANG BLOWUP HERE. REQUIRE IMMEDIATE HELP TO DEAL WITH THE--"

Junkyard Hogs

by G. D. Swick and Allen Varney



Playtested by Keith Carter, Jim Gould, and David Ladyman

Scully hadn't given notice that this would be his last shift at Okie's Salvage and Ordnance. If Okie Masterson had known Scully was leaving — and planning to take half the junkyard with him — Okie would have immediately terminated him. With ***extreme*** *prejudice. Even as it was, Okie — a sweet, trusting guy ("You fool punk kid, you don't do nothin' rotten tonight, you hear me?") — had already threatened Scully's life and internal organs if anything happened tonight. Tonight Scully would be all by himself at the graveyard shift, for the first time. And — Scully knew — the last time too . . .*

*"Bodycount" Curry, the Warthog gangleader, showed up two hours after Okie headed home. "Everything set?" he shouted from the blood-red Outlander cycle. Everything was set. "****Excelente****. Welcome to the Warthogs, new member. Squeal and I'll kill you." Scully felt flattered by Curry's attention; the raid tonight would establish the Hogs' supremacy over all of Reid, and Bodycount was sure to show his gratitude to Scully for making it possible. After all, hadn't Scully "persuaded" Norm and Jute to call in sick? Hadn't Scully originally proposed the midnight raid as soon as that fine-looking Intimidator wagon showed up, just made for hauling away loot? Hadn't Scully kept the whole project absolutely hush-hush?*

Well, actually he hadn't quite managed that . . . but hey, Sylvia was his ***sister****, and she knew better than to talk loose about her big brother's big chance to join the Hogs. She wouldn't let news of the raid get around to the wrong people — Scully was sure of it. He was sure when Curry pulled up at midnight with Motor and Austin and Strongarm and the rest. He was sure as all remained quiet while Motor got the Intimidator running and took it for a slow spin around the yard; he was still sure as the gang members piled up the weaponry from the building storehouse on the ground outside, then went scavenging around the junk piles to see what else looked interesting.*

But when the front gate blew open and the Mongrel cycles roared in shooting, suddenly Scully wasn't so sure . . .

Junkyard Hogs is a car- and cycle-combat scenario that was designed for the ***Car Wars*** universe, but can easily be adapted to any car-combat or spy game such as ***Battlecars, Espionage!, Mercenaries, Spies & Private Eyes***, etc. Only background details need be changed, as follows:

(1) The cars of ***Car Wars*** in 2034 are primarily plastic, not metal. The Melter (see Section 4), a giant "microwave oven" designed to melt salvageable armor from wrecks and recycle it, can become a metal crusher. Game effects of a crusher are described at the end of Section 4.

(2) Weapons in this scenario are classified as *Light, Medium, Heavy,* and *Hand Weapons,* as an aid to conversion. They are graded according to how well they penetrate the armor on the vehicles in the junkyard. The cycles and most of the cars in ***Junkyard Hogs*** generally have about 5 to 10 points of armor on each side in ***Car Wars*** terms; consider this as light-to-average armor for your system.

A *Light* weapon (for any system) is one that will do minimal damage; it would take 3–4 shots with the weapon, doing typical damage, to penetrate the front or back armor of the motorcycles in this scenario.

A *Medium* weapon will penetrate the armor in about two shots.

A *Heavy* weapon will blow away most or all of a cycle's front or back armor in one good shot (or two unlucky ones).

Hand weapons don't do much damage to ***Car Wars*** vehicles. Guns and pistols in your system should be no match for the armored fighting-cycles in this adventure.

(3) Combat and skill die-rolls are given for six-sided dice (abbreviated "d6"); in most cases success depends on rolling a given number *or higher* on 2d6. If your system uses 3d6 or polyhedral dice, you can convert percentage chances for success given in the scenario to your own dice by consulting the conversion chart given on the next page.

(4) Distances in ***Junkyard Hogs*** are given both in feet and in ***Car Wars***-scale inches (1" = 15'). The scenario descriptions also

occasionally refer to "squares," meaning the small (¼") squares of the *Car Wars* grid system. If your game system uses a different scale or a different grid system, the distances given in feet should allow you to convert without much difficulty.

(5) The damage that various objects and obstacles can take before breaking or collapsing is described in *Car Wars*-style Damage Points (abbreviated DP). For conversion purposes, figure that 1 DP represents very thin sheet metal, easily penetrated with a small pistol, while the walls of an average house might be 4 or 5 DP. A heavy brick wall is 9 or 10 DP, and so on.

THE SITUATION

Okie's Salvage & Ordnance is a large and prosperous auto junkyard outside Reid, Texas (formerly College Station). It lies on "turf" disputed by two small-time cycle gangs, the Warthogs (led by "Body-count" Curry) and "Longbow" Cassady's Mongrels. The junkyard salvages weapons as well as vehicles; the central building is sometimes a virtual arsenal of vehicular weaponry in various states of repair.

These weapons, and some desirable wrecked vehicles, are the object of a burglary attempt by the Warthogs, aided by their "inside man," a kid named Scully. The Warthogs expect no trouble during the burglary; only the core members of the gang have shown up, and they have left only a token pair of guards at the locked gate of the yard. Several of them have ridden into the yard doubled up, two to a cycle, so that they could drive away in the newly-arrived Intimidator station wagon or one of the other wrecks, laden with looted weapons.

However, the rival gang, the Mongrels, has learned of the burglary. Longbow Cassady has marshalled what forces he could find on short notice to raid the yard, corner the Warthogs, destroy them, and maybe even burglarize the yard themselves. In the event that both gangs survive, the Masterson weapons may prove crucial in gaining dominance of the area.

The Mongrels are essentially ambushing the Warthogs while they are trapped in the yard, underarmed and (probably) away from their cycles. The invading gang has a gas grenade which may take out the two guards before they can warn the rest of the Warthogs. But the Mongrels don't realize that, as the scenario begins:

(a) the Warthogs have already gotten the newly-arrived vehicle, a modified Intimidator station wagon, into running condition; and

(b) several other vehicles that arrived the same day have not yet been stripped of their armor or weapons; some of the cars are even mobile . . . after a fashion . . .

1. THE YARD

Okie Masterson's salvage yard is 315' x 480', including the parking lot — conveniently, this exactly fits one 21" x 32" *Car Wars* mapsheet, at a scale of 1" per 15'. The junkyard map in this supplement is rendered in one-fourth *Car Wars* scale — that is, ¼" on this map means 1" in actual scale. The players need to redraw it into a full-scale combat map at whichever scale their game system uses.

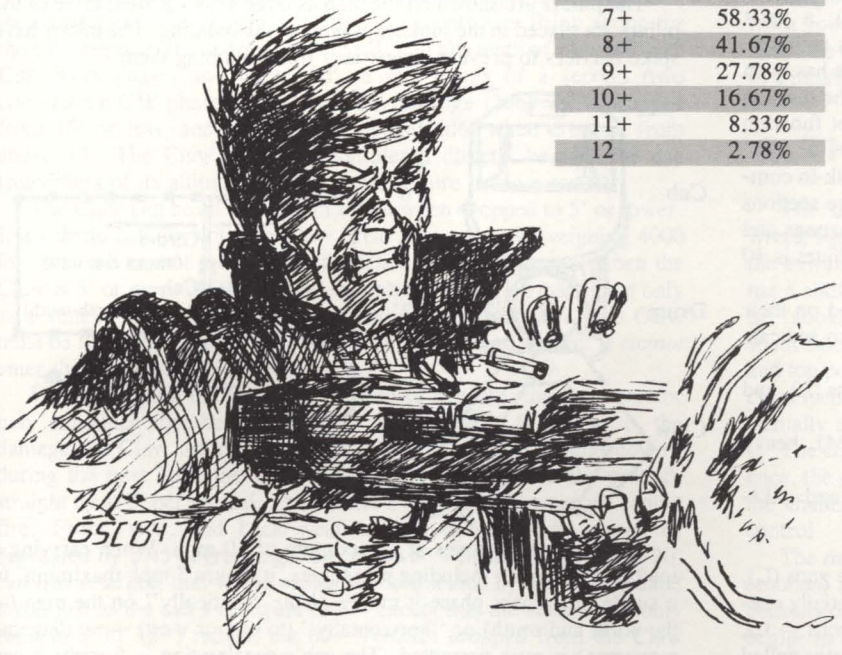
The parking lot and the junkyard roads are packed dirt; treat them as moderately hazardous driving conditions (in *Car Wars*, the roads are a D1 hazard).

The junk is piled into heaps up to 30 feet high. The coarsely-textured areas of the junkheaps represent peaks high enough for a pedestrian to jump up and attempt to catch the Claw (Section 3). Finely-textured areas are lower reaches of the heaps. Dotted lines represent ground-level footpaths between the mounds on either side, usable only by pedestrians, *not* vehicles. A pedestrian moving on the footpaths moves at normal speed; a pedestrian moving on the heaps moves at half-speed (in *Car Wars*, during alternate phases). Vehicles may never enter junkheap squares. Junkheap squares have 20 DP for collision purposes. Rules for pedestrians sheltering behind junkheaps are given in Section 6D.

The yard is surrounded by two fences, each nine feet high. The outer fence is thin corrugated steel (3 DP) which serves mainly to shield the junkyard from the public eye. The *inner* fence, 7.5' (½") inside the outer perimeter, runs all the way around the yard except in front of the main building and behind the gate. It is an electrified chain-link fence (4 DP, can only be ruptured by ramming or by area-effect weapons) that

CONVERSION TABLES

2d6		*3d6*		*1d20*	
Roll	*% Equivalent*	*Roll*	*% Equivalent*	*Roll*	*% Equivalent*
2 or more	100.00%	3	0.46%	1 or more	100%
3+	97.22%	4 or less	1.85%	2+	95%
4+	91.67%	5–	4.62%	3+	90%
5+	83.33%	6–	9.26%	4+	85%
6+	72.22%	7–	16.20%	5+	80%
7+	58.33%	8–	25.93%	6+	75%
8+	41.67%	9–	37.50%	7+	70%
9+	27.78%	10–	50.00%	8+	65%
10+	16.67%	11–	62.50%	9+	60%
11+	8.33%	12–	74.07%	10+	55%
12	2.78%	13–	83.80%	11+	50%
		14–	90.74%	12+	45%
		15–	95.73%	13+	40%
		16–	98.15%	14+	35%
		17–	99.54%	15+	30%
		18–	100.00%	16+	25%
				17+	20%
				18+	15%
				19+	10%
				20	05%



When you need to roll dice, just check the percentage that the 2d6 chart shows you need to carry out a particular action successfully. Find the corresponding percentage (or get as close as you can, rounding *in your favor*) on the appropriate conversion chart, and you're all set. *Example:* A character has to roll 8 *or more* on 2d6 to hit a cycle. This is a 41.76% chance to hit successfully. On 1d20 you would need a 12 *or more* to hit; on 3d6 you would need a 10 *or less* to hit.

inflicts fatal or near-fatal damage on any unprotected person who touches it (in ***Car Wars***, 3d6; body armor doesn't protect). Vehicles and their occupants are immune to this damage.

The fence is electrified in approximately two-inch (30') sections. Rupturing one section takes out the electricity in that section only. One breach is sufficient to destroy the charge in that section of fence.

There is one gate in the fence, in the front near the building. It is locked but not electrified; if it were electrified there would be great hazard to innocent passersby, and Okie's insurance rates would skyrocket. The gate is steel, 7.5' high, and has 4 DP. For more on the gate, see Section 6B.

The scenario takes place at night, but the entire yard is brightly floodlit by eight large banks of stadium-type lights, two on each side of the map. Lighting controls are in Okie Masterson's office in the building. The yard is always lighted at night to allow the graveyard shift to do salvage work; the lights will create no suspicion tonight. If either player manages to turn off the lights, ordinary night combat modifiers are in effect.

The junkheaps are categorized roughly according to the contents predominating in each. Players are not likely to need the information for this scenario, but the junkheaps are categorized as follows:

2 — Doors, fenders, misc.
3 — Tires
4 — Cycles
5 — Subcompacts
6 — Compacts
7 — Luxury / Mid-sized
8 — Mid-sized
9 — Subcompacts
10 — Staton wagons / Vans
11 — Vans / Pickups
12 — Scrap metal

2. THE BUILDING

This is basically a bunker, 12' high. The building is protected by thick concrete walls (20 DP). The front entrance to the building is locked; Scully has the key. The door is light steel (4 DP), as is the unlocked back door of the same room. This room is the front office and customer area, with a long wooden counter, soft drink machines, two desks, and several chairs. In a locked drawer in the right desk is a small strongbox (4 DP) with $60 in small change, used as a daily base fund for cash transactions.

The doors to the arsenal are much stronger: solid steel (7 DP per door). Scully also has the keys to these doors, which are locked.

The Arsenal (Weapon Storage): Okie makes his profits through high turnover. His low-priced used weapons are in demand and he seldom can keep any great number of functioning weapons in stock. As the scenario begins, the Warthogs have plundered the arsenal and have found only one anti-tank gun (Heavy), two rocket launchers and two flamethrowers (both Medium), two machine guns (Light), a paint sprayer, and a smokescreen (defensive weaponry only), plus ammunition equal to two full loads for each weapon. All of this loot has been piled just outside the far left double door of the building, at the marked spot on the map. All the weapons are vehicular and will not function until mounted on a vehicle.

Ordinarily, all vehicular weapons are stored in locked walk-in compartments labelled A, B, C, and D on the map. Each of these sections has walls of 10 DP and double doors (8 DP each). Hand weapons and small arms are stored in a locked cabinet labelled I; the cabinet is 10 DP, with three single doors (10 DP each).

The usual contents of each compartment, clearly labelled on their doors, are as follows (each weapon is coded H, M, or L to indicate Heavy, Medium, or Light):

A: Recoilless rifles (M), anti-tank guns (H), machine guns (L), and Vulcan machine guns (M).

B: Rocket launchers (M), heavy rockets (H), lasers (M), heavy lasers (H), and flamethrowers (L).

C: Paint sprayers, smokescreens, oil jets, minedroppers, and spikedroppers (defensive weaponry only; no attack damage).

D: Ammunition for all weapons, plus mines and spikes.

Hand weapons cabinet: pistols, heavy pistols, submachine guns (L), grenades (L), rifles, LAWs (Light Anti-Tank Weapons, essentially one-shot bazookas — M), VLAWs (Very Light Anti-Tank Weapons — L), shotguns, etc. The Warthogs planned to wait until the Intimidator pulled up behind the building before unlocking and unloading this cabinet. Assume that any quantities the players require are in the cabinet, *except* that there are only *two* VLAWs and *one* LAW there. It takes one second to remove a weapon from its rack; all the weapons are, of course, unloaded, except the "fire-and-forget" LAW and VLAWs.

Loading a weapon takes five seconds. If the character doesn't carry that type of ammunition, it takes an additional five seconds from entry into compartment D to locate and get the correct ammo.

The central shaded area of the arsenal is filled with salvaged and rebuilt power plants. These are bulky and heavy, much like modern-day engine blocks, and for gaming purposes cannot be moved. They serve as junkheaps for purposes of shelter and cover.

Area E is Okie Masterson's office. Its walls are 4 DP (bulletproof Spalltex® armor-glass). One desk, a photocopy machine, several chairs, file cabinets, and a control console set in the wall. The console, behind an unlocked metal panel, controls the floodlights and the power circuits for the Claw and the Melter (Sections 3 and 4). Any character who spends two seconds motionless, adjacent to the control panel, can shut off the power to any or all of these. There is a shotgun loaded with four shells close at hand beneath the desk.

Area F is the bookkeeper's office. Exactly like Okie's office, except there is no control panel and no shotgun.

Areas labelled G are restrooms. Walls are 5 DP — if anyone doesn't want to use the unlocked doors.

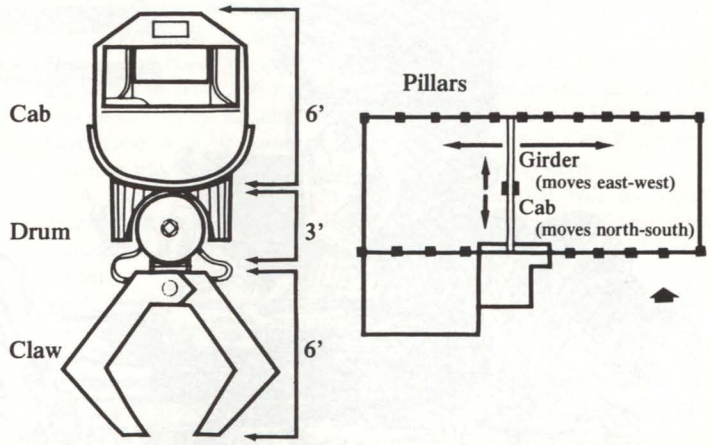
The two sets of double doors at the back of the arsenal have been left *unlocked* by Scully and the Warthogs while they are out in the yard. The doors have 10 DP apiece.

The attached garage has no door to the main building. The only entrances are the three garage doors in the north side, all of which are locked (4 DP). The garage is pretty flimsy; the walls are 4 DP as well, except for the one bordering the arsenal, which is 20 DP. This garage is where Okie and the bookkeeper ordinarily park their cars; now the garage contains only Scully's own motorcycle (Section 7) and the forklift (Section 9).

3. THE CLAW

In a salvage yard you need some means of lifting wrecks onto and off the junkheaps. Okie's method is the Claw: a giant grappling device weighing about two tons, winch-driven and suspended by a *really* thick cable from a control cab above. The cab shuttles back and forth (north and south on the map) along a strong steel girder 195 feet long, which in turn travels along runners oriented east-and-west. The runners are supported by insulated pillars anchored in the electrified fence along the north and south walls. For game purposes assume all the pillars are indestructible.

The pillars are shown on the map as large gray squares; three of the pillars are placed in the junkheaps west of the building. The pillars have spike barriers to prevent pedestrians from climbing them.



The Claw cab moves at a maximum of 10 mph. When carrying a load over 500 lbs., including passengers, it moves 5 mph maximum. In a single movement phase it moves *either* "vertically" on the map (to the north and south) *or* "horizontally" (to east or west) — no diagonal movement is ever permitted. The cab's acceleration is 5 mph; it can decelerate 10 mph per turn. The cab can only move in the area of the

map bounded by the pillars. The cab counter moves along the map-grid as an ordinary car counter does, except that it cannot "bend" or "drift." Ignore junkheaps or other "terrain" obstacles when moving the cab.

The junkheaps reach a height of 30'. The Claw itself is 6' high, as is the cab, and the cable drum adds another 3' to the height of the whole apparatus, making a total of 15'. This provides just enough clearance for the Claw to skirt the tops of the heaps when fully retracted, because the runners are 45' from the ground. If the Claw is lifting a vehicle, the vehicle may not clear the heaps; see below.

The cab is not built for combat, but the infrastructure is *very* solid: 6 DP. The bottom of the cab is curved in what turns out to be an anti-ballistic angle; projectiles that lack the "punch" to penetrate the steel bounce off. Therefore, vehicular weapons do normal damage against the cab, but hand weapons do only half damage (rounded down), signifying their lesser punch.

The cab has a control panel (1 DP) and can hold up to four people; at least one person is required to operate the Claw. If a shot penetrates the cab's "armor," designate the control panel and each occupant of the cab with a number from 1 to 6 and roll a die to see who or what is hit; the number rolled shows who takes the damage (if no one's number is rolled, the shot has luckily missed all occupants). Any damage remaining from an attack hits the opposite side of the cab. When the cab is breached three times, its armor is effectively gone.

Attacking to or from the cab: Because of its height, the cab is fairly difficult (–2) to target. When the Claw is *fully retracted,* it protects the bottom of the cab from weapons fired directly underneath or in a 7.5' (½") radius around it.

Characters in the cab get a sighting bonus or penalty to hit according to the height rules of your game system. (For ***Car Wars*** use ***Sunday Drivers*** rules — no penalty for firing downward.) Characters in the cab can fire at targets within a 60' (4") radius that would be shielded at ground level by intervening debris (Section 6D).

Operating the Claw: Only two characters in this scenario can operate the cab controls: Scully and Jake McLowry of the Mongrels (who used to work in a junkyard). Either one can activate and operate the Claw by beginning his movement turn in the cab. If the cab's operator is killed or eliminated, the cab immediately stops and the Claw remains at its current altitude. Scully or Jake may operate the cab and Claw by remote control at the staircase panel controls indicated on the map; note, however, that the cab's control panel automatically overrides ground commands. If the cab's controls are destroyed by an attack, the cab and Claw are frozen in place and cannot be moved for the rest of the scenario. If the ground controls are destroyed but the cab controls aren't, the cab can still operate.

The Claw can be dropped from beneath the cab to any altitude, including ground level, very quickly; this counts as a firing action for the cab operator. It can drop up to 15' (1") in one tenth of a second (one ***Car Wars*** phase) and up to 30' in two tenths of a second (two *consecutive* ***CW*** phases). It does heavy damage (2d6) when dropped from 15' or less, and *very* heavy damage (4d6) when dropped from above 15'. The Claw is always considered directly beneath the cab (regardless of its altitude), so it doesn't require its own counter.

The Claw can be an obstacle in a path when dropped to 5' or lower. If a vehicle collides with the Claw, treat it as a vehicle weighing 4000 lbs. The cab cannot move while the Claw is on the ground; when the Claw is 5' or more off the ground the cab can move normally, but only as a vehicle could, along roadways and not on junkheaps. The Claw must be fully retracted for the cab to enter a junkheap square. It *cannot* enter the staircase squares (see below).

When dropping the Claw onto a vehicle beneath, the cab operator may announce that he is dropping "to grapple." In this case, the damage the Claw inflicts on the vehicle is cut in half (round down); during the next turn, the Claw may *lift* the vehicle from the ground, straight up at 5' per second. The vehicle's top-mounted weapons cannot fire. Front, side, and back weapons can ordinarily be raised or depressed by a 45 degree angle up or down. Vehicles lifted above 20' can fire at targets that would ordinarily be shielded by debris at ground level, just as the cab's occupant can — except that the vehicle can only sight in a 30' (2") radius, not 60'. Vehicles *dropped* from the Claw (this counts as a firing action for the cab operator) take damage according to the falling rules of your game; alternatively, they can take damage as if the Claw had dropped on *them* from the same height. If the cab enters a *coarsely-textured* junkheap square while the Claw is grappling a vehicle, the vehicle takes collision damage according to your game's collision system. The damage is inflicted on the vehicle's underbody. Claw and vehicle can enter an *finely-textured* junkheap square without damage.

The Claw is nearly indestructible for game purposes (30 DP), as is its cable (20 DP and –8 to hit).

Climbing into the cab: The cab begins the scenario in the designated spot at the upper center of the map, with the Claw fully retracted. There is a staircase of sorts beside the cab (shown on the map), four flights reaching 40' high and of pretty sturdy construction (8 DP). The staircase leads to a short ladder on the outside of the cab which characters use to enter it. The staircase is of open construction; a person takes four seconds to climb to the top — one second per 10' flight, with customary sighting penalties to target or be targeted while climbing — plus one more second to enter the cab. At the top of the staircase are the remote cab controls (see above). If the Claw collides with any staircase square, apply damage to the numbered square nearest the Claw's current altitude, regardless of which number square the cab counter actually collided with. For example, if the Claw were at 20' altitude when it hit square 4, the damage it inflicted would be applied to square 2 (20' off the ground) instead. If the Claw is equidistant from two floors, the lower floor takes the damage.

Unlike a conventional building, the staircase can be toppled *before* it takes a number of breaches equal to its DP. Just *four* breaches will collapse the staircase; it falls in the direction of the last breach, doing 2d6 damage to whatever (or whoever) is underneath. It takes two full seconds to fall, though, so you can probably get out from beneath it if you're nimble-footed. When it hits, place debris counters in a line 45' (2½") long radiating outward from the origin point.

A pedestrian crazy or desperate enough to attempt to reach the cab the *hard* way can climb to a shaded area of a junkheap adjacent to the cab counter and try to climb the winch cable to the cab. The character should roll against dexterity or some similar attribute to make the jump onto the Claw or cable successfully. (In ***Car Wars***, roll 8+ on 2d6.) If the character fails the jump, he falls back onto the heap, taking minor damage (one point in ***Car Wars***; body armor does *not* protect). If he succeeds in the jump, he can climb up the cable at 5' per second (plus 5' more if the cable is being retracted!). Shaded junkheaps are 30' high, and the cab bottom is 39' above the ground.

The character cannot be attacked from the cab until he has climbed past the cab bottom, at which point he can be targeted at point-blank range. He is difficult (–2) to hit from the ground. As you might expect, he's too busy to do any firing himself.

Leaping from the cab: Don't do it. If you *do* do it, use falling rules from your game system, and add extra damage if you land on a junkheap. To calculate distances fallen, assume that finely-textured portions of a junkheap are 15' high, while the coarsely-textured portions are 30'.

4. THE MELTER

The melter is a giant microwave-type oven used to melt off a wreck's plastic armor, siphon the slag to a cooling tank, and incinerate the unwanted remains of an otherwise unsalvageable wreck. The melter has a sliding top (20' x 10') through which the Claw drops the items to be "cooked"; there is also a ground loading port (20' x 15' tall) on the south side. Both of these must be closed for the melter to work. The side and top ports are open as the scenario begins; they take five seconds to close (separately or simultaneously). Walls and doors of the melter are virtually impenetrable (30 DP each).

The controls for the melter are at the southwest corner; for convenience, the stairway control panel (see above) also has remote controls for the melter, but these are automatically overridden by the ground control.

The melter works very quickly. A vehicle catches fire after just six seconds; after nine seconds all the oxygen in the chamber has been consumed or otherwise reacted, so the fire is extinguished. The vehicle begins to melt after 12 seconds; after 15 seconds, tremendous bolts of static are discharged from the metal frame of the vehicle, charring the walls and ceiling. The vehicle's armor is completely melted off after

one minute; the entire melting operation is complete after 90 seconds, at which point the governors cut in and the melter shuts off automatically. The remains of the car are usually carried out of the yard by forklift and recycled at a nearby metal recycling facility.

Should an unfortunate character be trapped inside the melter while it is operating, there are clearly-marked safety cutoff switches located every ten feet along each wall, and while operating, the interior is brightly lit (for just this reason). If the character can reach a switch in the first three seconds of operation, he can shut off the melter instantly and takes no appreciable damage. For each additional three seconds the character spends in the melter, he sustains fairly heavy damage (in ***Car Wars***, ½d6, minimum one point; body armor does *not* protect). No ordinary human can survive more than 10–12 seconds in the melter. (Referees of superhero RPGs, please note that the melter makes an excellent deathtrap to test your superhuman characters!)

The melter is 15' tall. There are ladders along each side leading to the top. Treat ladders as stairs for climbing purposes; a character firing from a ladder takes a penalty (-2 in ***Car Wars***) when firing. While the melter is operating, the roof becomes uncomfortably hot to stand on, and no character can stay on the roof.

(Note: You may wish to change the melter to a *crusher* for your game system. A metal crusher is a giant open-air vise-like mechanism that will crush any vehicle smaller than a large truck into a metal cube no larger than 4' on a side. It has safety switches around its interior just as the melter does. A vehicle is unharmed if the crusher is turned off within three seconds of starting; from four to six seconds the vehicle takes heavy damage; after seven seconds the vehicle is basically useless, and after ten it is unsalvageable. After 30 seconds the former vehicle is a cube; the crusher takes 45 seconds for a complete cycle of operation. A character can escape the crusher within six seconds, on

Autoduelling on a Budget

Junkyard Economics

by G.D. Swick and Allen Varney

When Henry Ford started his automobile assembly lines, some bright entrepreneur immediately put a fence around several acres of land and set up a junkyard, in anticipation of all the mangled vehicles that would be coming his way. In 2034 shade-tree mechanics are still going to junkyards for spare parts and munitions at discount prices. The parts aren't usually guaranteed, true; but at these prices, what do you expect?

Buying

At various times you can find equipment at a junkyard for any vehicle up to van size. (There are special junkyards for bigger vehicles up to and including the giant 18-wheelers, but that's another article.) Purchasing a piece of equipment at any given time is a function of its availability, condition, cost, and its chances to malfunction, all of which you can simulate using the following guidelines.

Availability: Tires are always available. *Armor* is *not* available through the junkyard; it is usually scavenged from the wrecks, melted, recycled, and resold by the point at a big shop or garage. *Ammunition* is in high demand and pretty scarce, showing up about 33% of the time and only in quantities of one full load for whatever weapon type you're looking for. *Weapons, chassis, spare parts*, and anything else are available about 50% of the time.

A character can visit the junkyard no more than once each week, if he expects to find anything new. Roll 1d6 (per week) for each piece of equipment or each load of ammunition the character is looking for. On a 1 or 2, the ammunition is available; on a 1, 2, or 3, the piece of equipment is available. A referee is free to modify the percentage chance based on the size and location of the yard and how common the desired part is. For example, a straightforward oil jet would show up more often than the latest gadget from Uncle Albert's.

Condition: Most of the tires in a junkyard are actually in pretty good shape; the yard gets so many of them that it can afford to be choosy. Roll 1d6 for each tire purchased; on a 1 it has one point of damage; on a 2, two points; on a 3 through 6, it is undamaged. (Don't try to keep rolling endlessly until you get a pristine set; assume that the ones you're rolling for were the best you could scrounge up.)

The condition of a weapon depends on whether you remove it from the vehicle yourself or buy one rebuilt. With the do-it-yourself approach, roll 1d6: On a 1 or 2, it has taken half damage; on any other result, it *appears* undamaged. Rebuilt weapons are undamaged and have a 30-day guarantee (keep your receipt).

Ammunition and chassis are in perfect condition.

Power plants and exotic items like targeting computers are left to the referee's discretion; in general, the higher "tech" the item, the less likely it is to be in good condition.

Cost: For most purposes, use the salvage rules in ***Car Wars*** to determine the cost of items purchased in a junkyard. Tires, though, are one-half list price; rebuilt weapons are three-fourths (75%) of list; salvage-it-yourself weapons will often go for 90% or even 80% of the regular salvage price. Ammunition is 90% of list. Odd and exotic items are negotiable.

Malfunction: Only weapons have a chance to malfunction. Presumably your character will have sense enough to test the weapon before barreling into the arena — but the weapon must be tested *after* purchase; most junkyards frown on firing off a burst before you've taken the weapon from the yard. The first time the weapon is fired, roll 1d6 if you salvaged the weapon yourself, or 2d6 if the weapon is rebuilt. On a roll of 1 for do-it-yourselfers, or 2 for rebuilt weapons, the weapon has malfunctioned. Go to the appropriate malfunction table in Section 5 of ***Junkyard Hogs*** and roll 1d6, subtracting 1 from the roll for a *rebuilt* weapon. Weapons you salvage yourself cannot be returned.

Selling

Use the salvage rules from ***Car Wars*** when you want to sell something to a junkyard. Usually the buyer will pay less than average (75% is a good figure) for jury-rigged equipment, and sometimes a little more for an interesting or especially nice item. You can sell burned wrecks and other scrap metal to the yard; the buyer will give you $10 a *ton* if you haul it in yourself, $4 otherwise.

Players who emphasize role-playing in their ***Car Wars*** campaign can modify the prices usually paid according to the traits and idiosyncrasies of the individual junkyard buyer making the purchase. For instance, Okie Masterson, owner of the yard used in ***Junkyard Hogs***, is a hardnosed cheapskate whose milk of human kindness curdled years ago. He will probably pay only nine-tenths of the usual salvage price for any vehicle or component — less if he has to tow the vehicle in.

Campaign Notes

Junkyard vehicles and weaponry provide a character with a low-cost entry into a continuing campaign. A young would-be duellist might be a junkyard employee himself, taking part of his pay in merchandise and getting first crack at desirable new arrivals. Granted, his salary is pretty low . . . but he can probably put together a nice machine without facing the rigors of Amateur Night.

Any town with an autoduel arena will have at least one junkyard, probably a large one; other towns may have one or two yards if a fair segment of the populace is affluent enough to junk a "used" vehicle instead of resurrecting it. The size of the yard will vary, as will the security — from lax (a non-electric fence and a couple of MGs) to vicious (anti-tank guns, recoilless rifles, Godzilla for a watchdog).

foot; if in the vehicle, he must get out of the vehicle within four seconds or he will be trapped inside it. Farewell.)

5. SCAVENGING

Okie Masterson is prosperous because he's efficient; his night salvage crew, however, is neither. Scully and the others have been known to let perfectly salvageable weaponry stay in a vehicle they toss on a junkheap. Knowing this, the Warthogs have taken the opportunity to scout around as the scenario starts, looking for more loot. Some of the gang members have found apparently functional weapons; most won't be of much use in the actual fighting, but they're good for victory points if successfully carried away from the junkyard (see Section 10).

For each Warthog that begins the scenario in a junkheap that *doesn't* harbor one of the vehicles listed in Section 9, roll two dice and consult this table to see what that gang member has found:

2 — Laser (Heavy)
3 — Rocket Launcher (Medium)
4 — Recoilless Rifle (M)
5 — Vulcan machine gun (M)
6–8 — Nothing
9 — Machine gun (L)
10 — Gas mask
11 — One grenade
12 — LAW (M)

When a character attempts to fire the LAW or throw the grenade, roll the die. On a roll of 1 through 5, it functions normally. But on a roll of 6, it is *defective:* the weapon malfunctions. Roll one die again for each defective weapon to determine how it malfunctions:

1 — Won't fire. Useless for rest of scenario.

2 — Blows up. Victim's hands damaged — aiming ability or dexterity reduced by two for rest of scenario.

3 — As 2, but victim is also blinded for two seconds.

4 — As 2, but victim is also blinded for four seconds.

5 — Victim blinded for remainder of scenario. Takes moderate damage (in ***Car Wars***, one point).

6 — Explosion. Instantly fatal.

A weapon that blows up does *not* get off a shot in the process. A blinded character may not attack until his vision clears. He cannot move unless another character moves with him to "help him along."

The gas mask is automatically functional. Don't roll for it.

The vehicular weapons scavenged from the junkyard heaps cannot be used during the scenario; their only value is in victory points, as detailed in Section 10. When the shooting starts, assume that the scavenged weapons have been almost completely dismounted from their wrecks; after one gang has eliminated or driven off the other, a few more minutes will suffice to remove them completely and cart them off. For each scavenged weapon, roll 2d6: The result is the number of minutes it will take to dismount the weapon and load it into the Intimidator (or other vehicle). If it will take seven minutes or more to dismount that weapon, the player probably won't want to bother with it, because if the gang members wait around that long they'll have the law to deal with (see Section 11).

The operable junkyard vehicles described in Section 9 may malfunction just as the scavenged hand weapons can. When a character fires one of these weapons *for the first time,* roll 1d6, just as for a scavenged hand weapon. On a 6, it malfunctions; roll 1d6 again on this table:

1 — Jams. Can be unjammed again in two seconds if the firing character does nothing else during that time.

2 — Jams. Won't fire at all; useless for rest of scenario.

3–4 — Blows up. Weapon useless; explosion damage halved and applied equally "inward" (to next adjacent component of vehicle) and "outward" (to the armor protecting the weapon). Explosion damage rolled on 1d6.

5 — As 3–4, except explosion damage is rolled on 2d6.

6 — As 3–4, except explosion damage is automatically the *maximum* damage that weapon normally inflicts — if it were a 1d6 weapon, the explosion would do six points of damage; a 2d6 weapon would do 12, and so on.

6. THE DOGS vs. THE HOGS

A. Setting Up the Hogs

As the scenario begins, the Warthogs have looted the building for the few major weapons currently in stock (Okie had a good week), piled them up behind the arsenal building, and are waiting for the gang's mechanic, "Motor" Morgan James, to fix the yard's most recent arrival, a modified "Intimidator" station wagon. They hope to haul away their plunder in this wagon. Most of the gang members, somewhat disappointed by the arsenal loot, are scavenging the junkheaps around the yard, including some other recent arrivals that have not yet been stripped.

The Intimidator and the other operable vehicles are described in Section 9. Place them at the designated points on the map. Put the Intimidator on any road section within 60' (4") of the north edge of the map. The Warthog player may start the Intimidator at any speed from 0 to 20 mph. Motor James is driving; there can be one passenger. The Intimidator cannot move below 4" of the north map-edge until the Warthogs are officially warned of the Mongrel attack.

Two Warthog guards (player's choice) must be placed inside and adjacent to the front gate.

For each remaining Hog, the Warthog player rolls two dice. The number rolled is the number of the junkheap in which that character begins the game; place the pedestrian anywhere on or adjacent to that heap. The character's cycle (if any) can be placed adjacent to the junkheap not closer than 2" to its owner; alternatively, it can be parked at the base of the staircase in the upper center of the map, if the owner wishes.

Roll for each character scavenging a "non-vehicle" junkheap (that is, any heap except 6, 8, 9, or 10) to see what, if anything, the character has found (see Section 5). *Do not* roll to see whether the weapon works until the first time it is actually fired, after the scenario begins.

After the Hogs are placed, the scenario starts with . . .

B. The Gate and the Grenade

The front gate is the only vehicular entrance to the yard. Unlike the electrified fence, it is not chain-link but a solid steel double door 15' wide (not electrified). It has 4 DP; four breaches will collapse it in the

HAND-HELD GRENADE LAUNCHER

The hand-held grenade launcher looks like a shotgun with a modified barrel. It counts as two grenade equivalents when carried. It costs $300, and gives the firer a 7 or better on 2d6 to hit any target within its maximum range of 12 inches. Standard range penalties still apply. In case of a miss, use the overshoot rules in ***Sunday Drivers***. Damage and ammunition cost are determined by the type of grenade being fired. (Any standard ***Car Wars*** grenade type can be adapted for use in the launcher.)

The hand-held grenade launcher is a breech-loading weapon: The barrel "breaks" just before it reaches the shoulder stock. (See illustration 1.) A single grenade is inserted at the base of the barrel; the barrel is then snapped shut and the launcher is ready for firing. (See illustration 2.) This procedure takes three seconds to accomplish. The grenade's fuse must be set *at the time of loading.* Anything up to five seconds is acceptable. The fuse will be activated automatically at the time of launching. This means the launcher can be carried around loaded and ready to fire. (The grenade can't fall out the front of the barrel, and it can't go off accidentally.) It also means that the firer is stuck with whatever length fuse was originally selected. If this doesn't fit combat conditions at the time of firing . . . too bad.

—the staff of *Autoduel Quarterly*

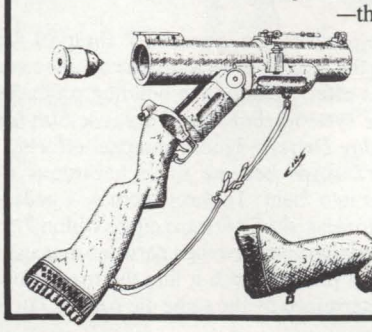
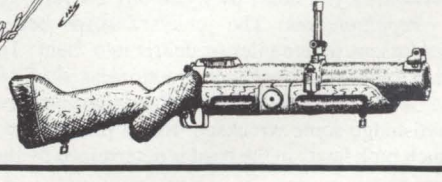


Illustration 1

Illustration 2



direction opposite the firing source of the last breach. The gate is 7.5' (½'') high and will do 1d6–1 damage to whatever it falls on.

Breaching the gate sounds an alarm which will warn the Hogs and bring the police within seven minutes (see Section 11).

The Mongrels' attack plan calls for removing the Warthog guards at the gate as suddenly and silently as possible. They have one anesthetic gas grenade and a hand-held grenade launcher (see page 19) which they can fire from a concealed position beyond the parking lot, suprising the guards. The gas grenade is fired by Lenore ''Recon'' Clanton of the Mongrels, who is a dead shot (+2 to hit); for game purposes assume the grenade hits where it is aimed.

The grenade affects an area 15' (1'') square. Roll one die for each victim within this radius:

1–2 — Victim falls unconscious instantly.

3–4 — Victim shouts warning before falling unconscious.

5 — Victim blinded for two seconds; otherwise unaffected. Shouts warning.

6 — No effect. Shouts warning.

If a character remains conscious, roll again each additional second he remains in the gas cloud. On rolls after the first, ignore *less* damaging results than the first. An unconscious character remains unconscious for the entire scenario.

The gas is transparent and does not affect targeting. The cloud dissipates after 60 seconds. The Mongrels all have gas masks that protect them from the grenade's effect. None of the Warthogs have masks — unless they can rummage some from the junkheaps.

The scenario begins when the grenade goes off; if it takes out both guards before they can warn the Hogs, the Hogs player can't move his characters (except the mobile Intimidator) or attack until the Mongrels fire, break into the building, ram the gate, or otherwise set off an alarm.

The Hogs can move after a delay of one second (one full turn) if there is a Hog character in line-of-sight of the gate who can see the guards fall and shout a warning.

If the Mongrel player elects to hold the grenade and launcher for later use, the scenario begins as soon as the Mongrel cycles enter the parking lot; all Warthogs are warned immediately (the guards detect them instantly). If the cycles in your game are gasoline-powered instead of electric, the noise of their engines will warn the Hogs regardless of the grenade's success in eliminating the guards.

C. Debris and Toppling

Cover: The wrecks in the junkyard offer protection from enemy fire. A pedestrian on a junkheap square is considered to have three points of armor; if a weapon penetrates the ''armor,'' he has no protection left as long as he stays in the same spot. If he moves to a new spot (in ***Car Wars***, another grid-square), he once again gains the three-point ''armor.'' If he goes back to the first spot on a later move, he can find another place to crouch, getting the defensive bonus.

An alternate, more complicated rule is to roll 1d6 for the pedestrian the first time his spot is fired on; the number rolled is the amount of armor protection the debris gives.

Line-of-sight: The standard, and most playable, way to treat target sighting in ***Junkyard Hogs*** is to let *any* part of a junkheap block line-of-sight. Players who want more realism can specifically agree before play begins to use this alternate rule: Treat any *edge* part of the heap — that is, any grid-square bordering a road — as just debris, which does not block sighting. Any *interior* junk square, *not* adjacent to a road, *does* block sighting.

Attacks from the Claw's cab ignore sighting restrictions within a 60' (4'') range; see Section 3.

Shrapnel: Hitting a junkheap produces no appreciable shrapnel for gaming purposes. People next to the area hit are not ordinarily affected, unless the weapon fired has area effect. Hitting the building produces shrapnel according to your game system. (For ***Car Wars***, use ***Sunday Drivers***. If you don't have ***Sunday Drivers***, ignore shrapnel effects.)

Toppling junk: The junkyard roads become more hazardous as pedestrians topple piles of debris into them. To throw debris, a pedestrian must spend one second motionless in a junk heap square within 7.5' (½'') of a road. Roll 2d6: A 7 or higher means the character managed to dislodge some wreckage from a pile and push it into the road. How much junk lands in the road is determined by the same die roll: A 7 or 8 means about a 4' square area (¼'', or one grid-square) is covered with debris; 9 or 10, a 7.5' square (½'' on a side); 11 or 12, a square area about 11' (¾'') on a side. The square must be placed adjacent to the junkheap and as near the toppling character as possible; otherwise, positioning is the toppling player's decision.

7. THE WARTHOGS

A. Characters

For players who enjoy role-playing, here is a description of the gang members involved. These may be used or ignored as desired; however, Scully and Jake McLowry are required for the game. All characters on both sides are wearing body armor — even Scully, who thinks it makes him look tough. These characters are given in ***Car Wars*** terms in the appendix to this scenario.

Scully: A born loser, Scully quit school at 16 and has been working for Okie Masterson ever since. At 17½, he fancies himself a tough guy and wears two Colt .45 revolvers (heavy pistols), Old West fashion. The trouble is, the guns belong to the junkyard; Scully has to leave them there when he gets off work, so he has never fired them. Roll for a possible malfunction the first time he uses one. He will be less than accurate (–1 to hit) when firing with hand or vehicular weapons. Scully is about as smart as a reasonably intelligent carrot.

''Bodycount'' Curry: Leader of the Hogs, he is a good tactician and a ruthless autoduellist. He earned his nickname in the arena, where he always racked up a body count. Completely amoral; loves a good fight; a good marksman (+2 to hit). Carries a heavy pistol.

Machine Gun Ketchum: The warlord of the gang; quiet and deadly. He is a bear of a man whose expertise is with machine guns. A very good (+2) shot with any MG. Carries an Izuzi SMG.

Crazy Jane Hickok: Bodycount's current lady-love. She handles a cycle *very* well; likes to weave on the road while targeting for sustained fire. Tends to stick close to Bodycount. Carries a light pistol. (Usually carries grenades as well, but she is temporarily out tonight.)

Motor Morgan James: The gang's mechanic; a true wizard. Said to be able to knit a motorcycle out of steel wool. Carries a .45 automatic (heavy pistol).

Bearclaw Tom Smith: A big man; not especially good on a cycle, but his size is intimidating. Carries a sawed-off shotgun on a sling.

Snake Garrett: A small, bony, unblinking man who handles a cycle well. Carries a .45 revolver (heavy pistol).

Johnny Deuce: A small, cowardly weasel who will fight only if the odds are in his favor. Carries two .45 automatics (heavy pistols).

Austin Stoudenmeyer: A good man in a fight, he will never run. Carries a sawed-off shotgun and a .38 revolver (light pistol).

George ''Strongarm'' Cusler: This guy is big and stupid. He is so obnoxious he even grates the nerves of the other Hogs, but he is a good shot (+1) with cycle-mounted weaponry. Also +1 with his .44 magnum heavy pistol.

B. Cycles

1. Outlander. Heavy cycle, super engine/power plant, heavy suspension, standard tires. Armor is light to average (F5, B5). Two linked machine guns (MGs) mounted forward. Weight 1190 lbs. Acceleration (Accel.) 10 mph; handling class (HC) 2. Belongs to Bodycount Curry.

2. Shogun 180. Medium cycle, medium power plant, heavy suspension, puncture-resistant tires. Armor is average (F10, B10). Two heavy rockets, one forward, one rear. Wt. 950 lbs. AC 10, HC 2. Belongs to Bearclaw Tom Smith.

3, 4, 5. Shogun 100s. Each a light cycle, small power plant, heavy suspension, puncture-resistant tires. Armor light to average (F6, B6). One MG mounted forward. Wt. 798 lbs. Accel. 10, HC 2. Belong to Snake Garrett, Johnny Deuce, and Crazy Jane.

6. Shogun 180. Same as number 2, except there is *no* front armor and *no* weapons. These were recently used up (or blown away) in a narrow escape. Belongs to Strongarm Cusler.

Machine Gun Ketchum and Motor James rode in with other gang members; they intend to ride out in the Intimidator.

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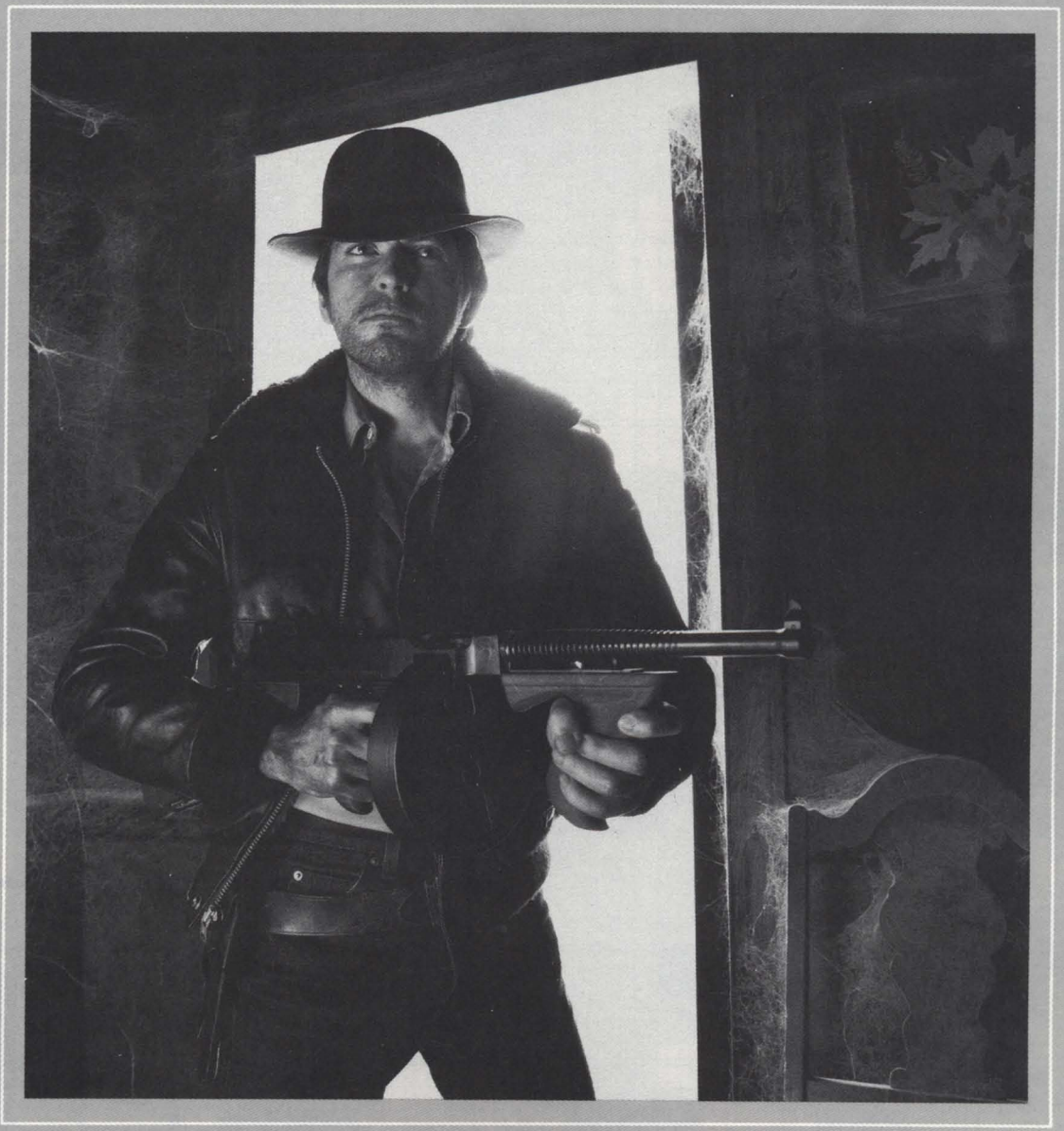

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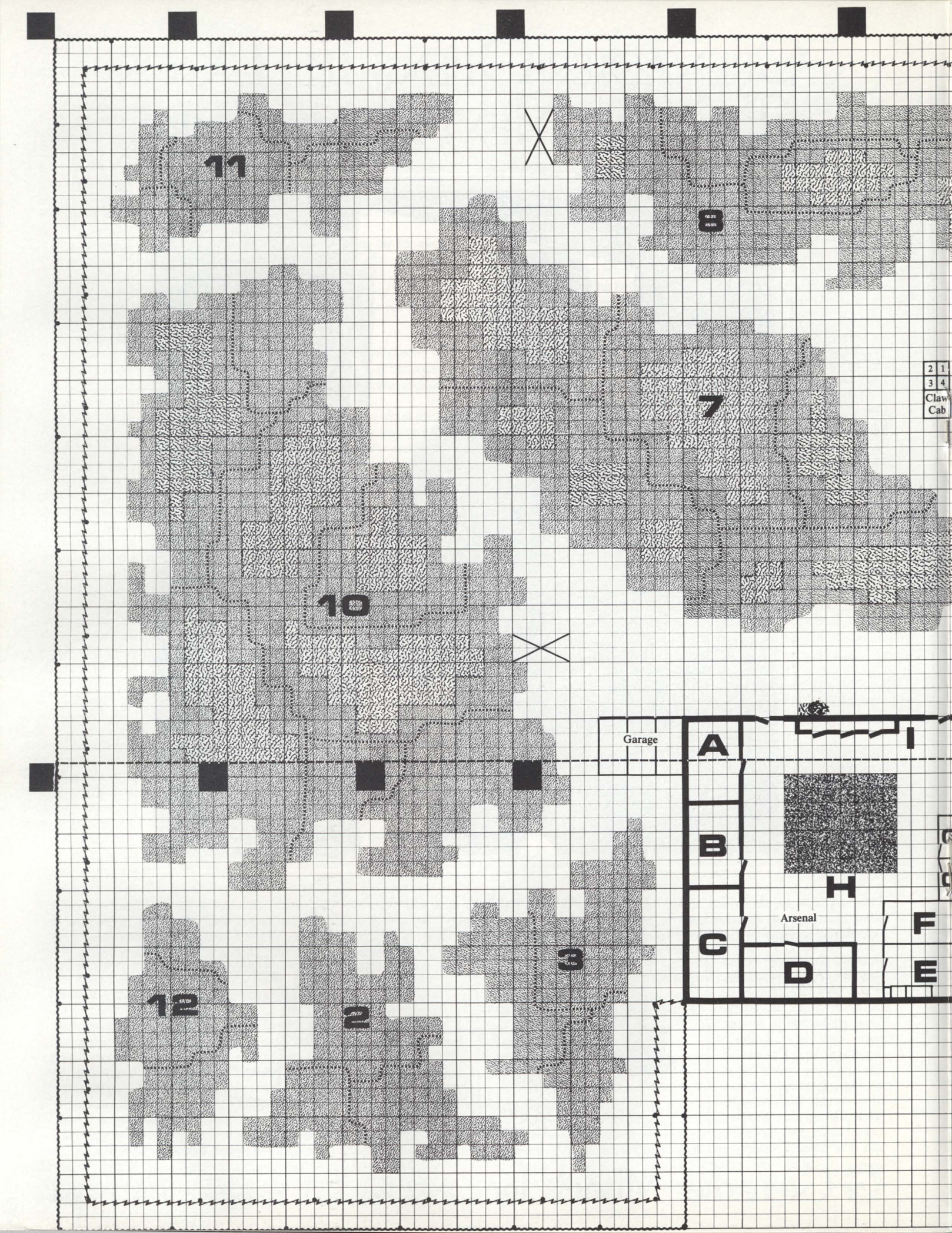
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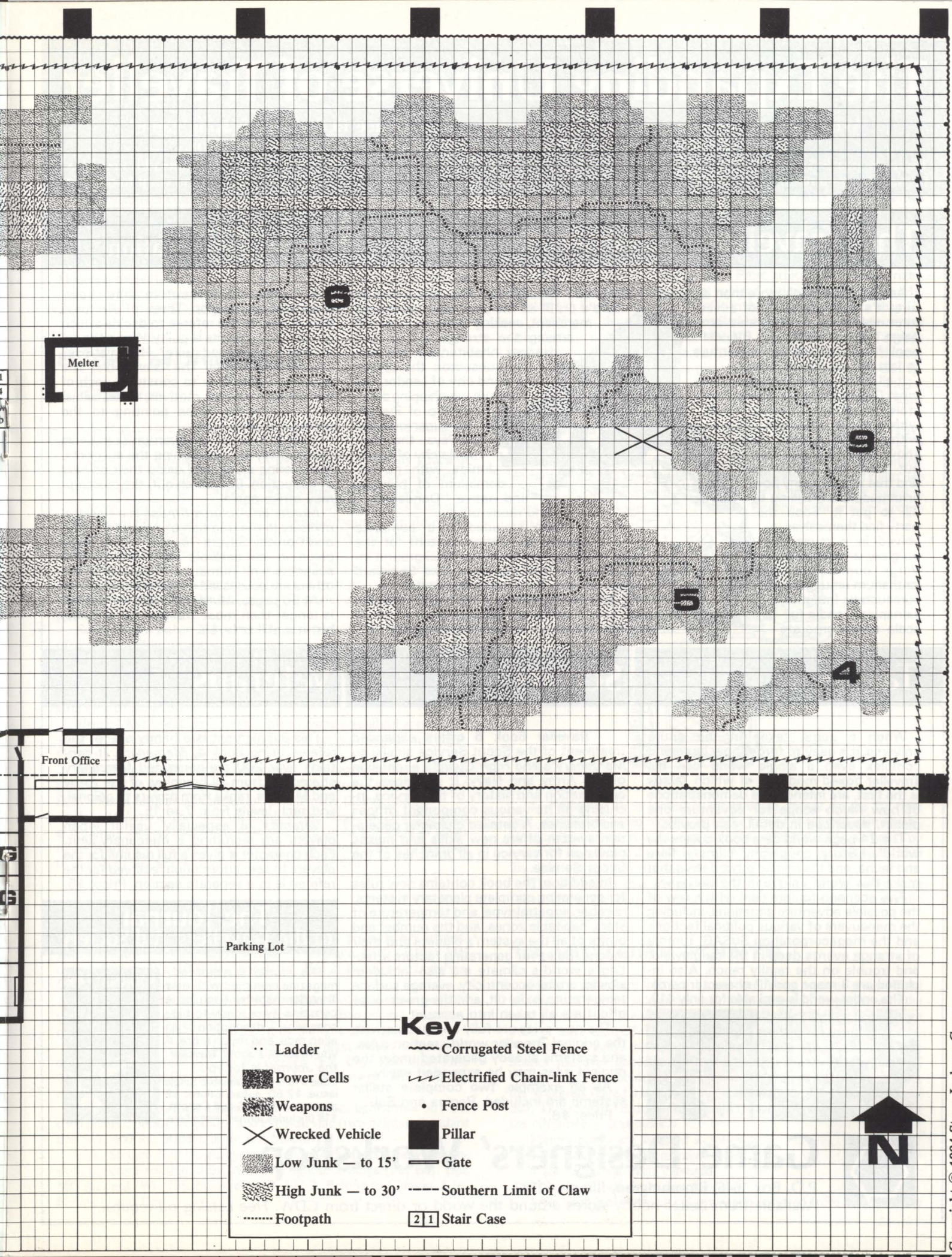

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The Expanding Universe of Traveller

Why do more people play Traveller than any other science fiction role-playing game? Because GDW knows that you can't fit the whole universe into one box.

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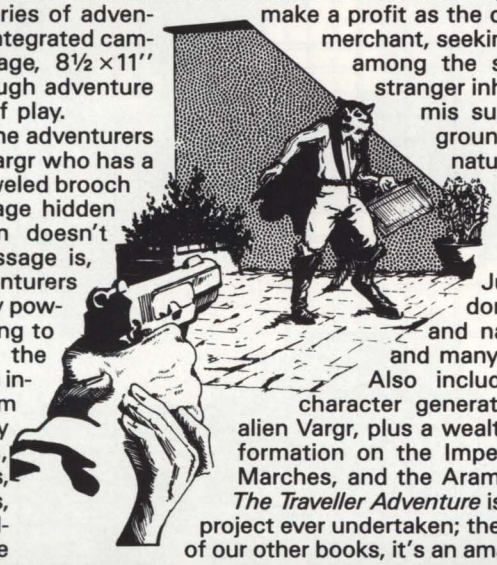
The Traveller Adventure



Actually, it's much more than an adventure: it's a whole series of adventures making up an integrated campaign. It's a 160-page, 8½×11" book filled with enough adventure to last for months of play.

It all starts when the adventurers meet Gvoudzon, a Vargr who has a stolen treasure: a jeweled brooch with a secret message hidden within it. Gvoudzon doesn't know what the message is, but soon the adventurers find that a great many powerful people are willing to kill to get it. Soon the party find themselves involved in a museum burglary, an attack by Vargr commandos, lanthanum smugglers, bureaucratic intrigues, kidnapping, and a full-scale megacorporate tradewar. Meanwhile, they must try to make a profit as the crew of a subsidized merchant, seeking cargo and patrons among the strange worlds and stranger inhabitants of the Aramis subsector: the underground city of Leedor, the nature-worshipping dictatorship of Pysadi, the eugenic elitists of Paya, the alien matriarchy of Yebab, Junidy with its condominium of humans and native "Dandelions", and many others.

Also included is a complete character generation system for the alien Vargr, plus a wealth of background information on the Imperium, the Spinward Marches, and the Aramis subsector.

The Traveller Adventure is the largest **Traveller** project ever undertaken; the equivalent of 6 to 8 of our other books, it's an amazing bargain at $12.

Murder on Arcturus Station

A corporate executive has been murdered on Station Three of Arcturus Belt. It's up to the referee to decide which of the nine suspects is guilty. Was it the executive's estranged wife? His mistress? The Solomani rebel? The Aslan noble? The adventure tells how to construct each of the possible crimes: motives, clues, alibis, even misleading clues pointing to the wrong suspect.

Then it's up to the adventurers to solve the mystery by questioning the suspects, discovering clues, and using their powers of deduction. But watch out: the murderer may strike again.

Murder on Arcturus Station is a classical mystery in the tradition of Agatha Christie and Dorothy Sayers—except that it takes place in an asteroid belt, one of the suspects isn't human, and several of the others are possessed of odd cultural quirks.

At 56 pages, *Murder on Arcturus Station* is longer than most **Traveller** adventures, but it's still only $5.

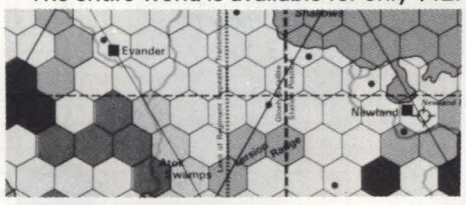
Tarsus

When a game takes in the entire universe, it's easy to forget how large and complex even a single world can be. **Traveller** boxed modules, of which *Tarsus* is the first, are intended as demonstrations of how much scope for adventure one planet, described in detail, can provide.

The 24-page world data book covers the world's history, geography, climate, flora and fauna, and the myriad other details that make this world unique in the universe.

Five scenario folders deal with a few of the possible adventure situations, including the maneuvers of various political factions and the megacorporation SuSAG, rumors of strange events deep in the tanglewald, and trouble on the family ranch. Also included are 3 maps and 12 character cards.

The entire world is available for only $12.



Scouts

Traveller Book 6 offers expanded treatment of the Scout Service similar to *Mercenary*'s and *High Guard*'s expansion of the Army and Navy. It describes the organization and history of the service, including all its various component offices and branches. A detailed character generation system offers new skills and makes provision for service in all branches of the Scout Service.

In addition, the book contains new rules for generating complete planetary systems: number, spectral type, and temperature of stars, habitable zones, and the number and orbits of all the system's planets and their moons. Rules for generating factors affecting a world's climate are also included: albedo, orbital eccentricity, average surface temperature, axial tilt, and the greenhouse effect are all taken into account.

The new rules are fully compatible with the original **Traveller** world creation rules, and systems already generated under the original rules may be expanded easily.

As an example, two complete stellar systems are included: Regina and Sol.

Price: $6.

Veterans

This supplement is a handy aid for the referee using Book 4, *Mercenary*. It contains over 200 pre-generated *Mercenary* characters from all branches of the Army and Marines, ranks from private to colonel, and tech levels from 7 to 15.

Veterans is especially useful when players are recruiting a mercenary unit. Each character is given a full resumé for the players to see; information reserved for the referee is in a separate section. Price: $5.

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The *Journal* is a quarterly magazine crammed with new **Traveller** material. Each issue contains two ready-to-play scenarios, a description of an alien race, and much more. If you're serious about **Traveller**, the *Journal* is for you.

Issue #18 is now available. Single issue: $2.50; subscriptions: $9 per year in the US and Canada, $18 (includes airmail) elsewhere.

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Available from better hobby stores around the world or direct from GDW. *Free catalog on request.*

C. Scully's Cycle

The great love of Scully's existence, this cycle is a "work in progress" that Scully is building into a wonder machine — as his cash flow allows. It begins the game parked in the garage, in the far left port. Remember, the garage doors are locked (4 DP apiece); Scully, of course, has the key. It takes two seconds to unlock and open a garage door.

The cycle is a custom model, operational but not finished. Scully intends to mount a machine gun in back, beef up the armor considerably, and improve the tires. As it stands:

Heavy cycle, super power plant, heavy suspension, standard tires. Front armor average (10 points), back armor *very light* (two points). Mounts a rocket launcher in front — but it has only two shots! (Will be more fully loaded after Scully's next paycheck.) No weapon in back . . . yet. Weight 1012 (including the driver, of course). Cost to date $4511.

8. THE MONGRELS

A. Characters

All Mongrels are wearing body armor and gas masks. The Mongrels are listed in ***Car Wars*** terms in the appendix.

"Longbow" Cassady: Leader of the Mongrels. Cassady's idea of subtle tactics: "Let's bust some heads." He handles a cycle well and is a good shot (+1 to hit). Carries a .45 automatic (heavy pistol).

Lenore "Recon" Clanton: Warlord of the Mongrels, this woman is deadly accurate (+2 to hit). As the scenario begins, she drops the grenade launcher she has just used and readies a LAW (Light Anti-Tank Weapon). Also carries a light pistol.

Peacock Lee: Only an average autoduellist, Lee calls attention to himself with his bright costumes. He likes to wear peacock feathers and paint his face with Day-Glo war paint. He carries a .45 revolver (heavy pistol).

Sullen Cullen Baker: No one remembers the last time Cullen smiled; of course, smiling is not a prerequisite for joining a cycle gang. He carries a submachine gun (SMG).

Blackjack Plumber: A tough, solid fighter who will never turn away from a fight; he has been known to get *real* mean. Carries an automatic rifle (+1 to hit with it).

Henry "Kid" McCarty: Despite his extremely youthful appearance — or because of it — McCarty goes out of his way to join in a fight. Carries a sawed-off shotgun.

Bad Penny Deal: Not a great cyclist, but deadly in hand-to-hand combat (+2 to hit in unarmed attacks), Deal throws herself into any fight without hesitation. Carries a .45 automatic (heavy pistol).

Jake McLowry: The chief mechanic of the Dogs, McLowry is good at repairing shot-up cycles, but he's no match for Motor Morgan James of the Warthogs. Carries a .38 revolver (light pistol). The only member of the Mongrels who knows how to operate the Claw.

B. Cycles

1. Shogun 200. Medium cycle, super power plant, heavy suspension, puncture-resistant tires. Armor is average (F10, B10). MG mounted front. Wt. 1000 lbs. Accel. 10, HC 2. Belongs to Longbow Cassady.

Sidecar to right. Light sidecar, light suspension, light armor on front (two points), back (one point), and exposed side (two points). Puncture-resistant tire. Wt. 400 lbs. Ridden in by Sullen Cullen Baker.

2. Outlander. Heavy cycle, super power plant, heavy suspension, standard tires. Armor is light to average (F5, B5). Recoilless rifle (medium) mounted forward. Belongs to Jake McLowry. Wt. 1140 lbs. Accel. 10, HC 2.

Sidecar to right. Light sidecar, light suspension, light armor on front (two points), back (one point), and exposed side (two points). Standard tire. Wt. 400 lbs. Ridden in by Kid McCarty.

3–6. Shogun 100s. Light cycles, small power plants, heavy suspension, puncture-resistant tires. Armor is light to average (F6, B6). One MG forward. Wt. 798 lbs. Accel. 10, HC 2. Belong to Clanton, Lee, Plumber, and Deal.

9. THE JUNKYARD VEHICLES

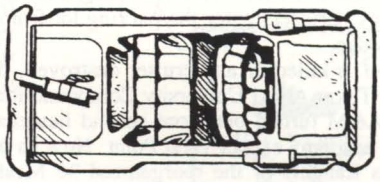
These vehicles are listed in ***Car Wars*** terms in the appendix.

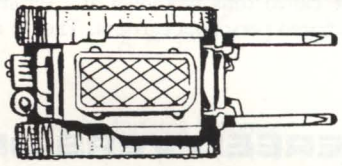
1. *Intimidator* (modified). This begins the scenario on any road section within 4" of the north map-edge. Station wagon, standard chassis, improved suspension, super power plant, puncture-resistant tires (front pair half-destroyed, rear pair slightly damaged). Linked MGs in turret, eight shots apiece. Front armor *gone.* Left, right, top, and underbody armor each about half-destroyed; back armor intact. Space for two passengers or 300 lbs. cargo. Motor Morgan James begins the scenario driving it. There can also be one passenger (Section 6A).

2. *VanGo.* This van has no front wheels. (There was this mine, see . . .) Though it is totally immobile, it has some armor and weapons left. Space for "driver" and gunner. Front armor low average; right, left, and back armor nearly gone; top and underbody intact. One MG mounted in a turret. Place the VanGo in the designated spot on heap 10.

3. *Stinger,* that crashed and rolled. Not much armor left on this subcompact, and the right front wheel is gone, but it's sort of mobile and has a recoilless rifle forward. Do you feel lucky? Heavy chassis, heavy suspension, small power plant, heavy-duty tires severely damaged (all three of them). Driver only, no cargo. Front armor very light, even lighter on right and underbody; the rest is gone. The Stinger starts in heap 9.

4. *Piranha,* that tailgated an 18-wheeler (once). Luxury car, heavy chassis, heavy suspension, large power plant, puncture-resistant tires. It has no top, period. Remaining armor intact. Carries driver and gunner; no cargo. One MG fully-loaded with extra magazine mounted right; one left; one in back. Forward rocket-launcher is empty; heavy rocket is gone. Fire extinguisher kaput. Place the Piranha in the marked spot in junkheap 8.





5. *Forklift.* This is locked in the building garage, in the far right port. An electric cargo-mover, about the size of a very tall motorcycle. Unarmored, driver only, handles clumsily, accelerates like a truck. Top speed 10 mph forward or backward. Wt. 3000 lbs.; can lift up to 2000 lbs. Scully has the key to the forklift.

The tow trucks that are usually in the junkyard are in Austin with Okie, who is attending the monthly Nite Owl Auction at the Armadillo Autoduel Arena.

10. VICTORY POINTS

Victory points are accrued by accomplishing various goals. They are awarded to each side at the end of the scenario; the player with the most points wins. The scenario ends when all characters on one side are dead or have escaped. (For escape rules, see below.)

The rival gangs have been sniping at each other for years, but neither has ever gotten a decisive advantage in the feud. The haul tonight might just be that advantage. The Warthogs hoped it would be; the Mongrels feared the same thing, and have staged the raid to prevent that. This scenario is thus a final rumble; each gang is trying to wipe out the other one — and quickly.

Victory points are assessed as follows:

5 for each rival gang member killed.
5 for each rival cycle captured.
3 for each rival cycle destroyed.
1 for each junkyard vehicular weapon removed from the yard. The

weapons pile from the main building is worth 9 if removed completely. The weapons take up less space dismounted than mounted, so all will fit in the Intimidator, or in any three other vehicles with cargo space (a cycle sidecar can be considered "cargo space" in an emergency).

7 for getting away with the Intimidator.

3 for getting away with any other junkyard vehicle except the forklift.

Escape: A character can retreat to fight another day by exiting the parking lot along the south or east map-edges. Neither side gets victory points for an escaping character.

11. THE COPS

Police patrols pass the junkyard more-or-less hourly. The Warthogs timed their arrival to follow the most recent patrol; they felt no time pressure. The Mongrels arrived about 15 minutes later. There still would be no imminent threat of police intervention — if the alarms weren't going off.

When the building entrance or the front gate of the yard is broken through, an alarm sounds in the yard and in Reid police headquarters. The police will arrive in force seven minutes after the alarm is triggered. The cycle battle itself certainly won't take very long; but if any character wants to stick around after the battle to look for more loot, he'll have company very soon.

There are three police cruisers, all identical; their statistics in ***Car Wars*** terms are given in the appendix. Each is luxury size, heavy suspension, extra-heavy chassis, super power plant, solid tires. Driver and gunner. Heavy armor. Two MGs forward, recoilless rifle turreted, spikedropper in back. Officer have .357 magnums (heavy pistols) and submachine guns. Cruisers enter the parking lot from anywhere along the south map-edge.

If any officer is killed or any cruiser destroyed, the survivors will radio to nearby Texas A&M University Compound for cadet reinforcements. Once, A&M turned out more second lieutenants for the U.S. Army than any academy except West Point. Now its military graduates enter the Texas Rangers or the reorganized 36 Mech Infantry of the Free Oil State of Texas. A&M reinforcements will show up *three* minutes after they're called (this is known as "scrambling"), with five tanks and five armored personnel carriers. They'll let you surrender if you ask nicely.

12. REFEREED VERSION
[For Referee's Eyes Only]

Junkyard Hogs is designed for two players without a referee. If a referee is available, certain alterations in the scenario background can be made to provide a few surprises. Players of this version should **STOP READING HERE.**

Confidential Referee Information: In this version, Scully is not the naive, fawning kid he appears to be. He actually wants to join the *Mongrels,* not the Warthogs . . . or maybe he's just for sale to the highest bidder. At any rate, he arranges for the Mongrel raid on the Warthogs to be a *true* ambush. Selected Mongrels have been secreted in the yard itself before the Warthogs arrive; as soon as the Hogs appear vulnerable, the rest of the invading gang strikes, aided by their own "inside men."

Setup: Jake McLowry of the Mongrels is concealed inside the cab of the Claw, ready to operate it at a given signal. Henry "Kid" McCarty is in the garage (which is unlocked) ready to open the door and ride out on Scully's unfinished cycle. The Outlander that these two ride in on in the two-player scenario is omitted from the game. The referee communicates this information to the Mongrel player, but *not* to the Warthog player! However, the Warthog player may be told he feels "suspicious" of the situation, and he is allowed to set up *where he wishes,* no closer than 60' (4") to the front gate. There must still be two guards at the gate, and the Intimidator must still start within 4" of the north map-edge. The Warthog player gets *six* victory points for killing Scully (the double-crossing traitor) and two victory points for immobilizing the cab and Claw. The Mongrels get no points for killing Scully.

Enjoy a good scrap!

Junkyard Hogs Appendix: Statistics for *Car Wars*

WARTHOG CHARACTERS

Scully: Cyclist 0, Gunner 0, body armor, two hvy. pistols, −1 to hit with hvy. pistols.

Bodycount Curry: Cyclist 2, Gunner 2; body armor, hvy. pistol. +1 to hit with hvy. pistol.

Machine Gun Ketchum: Cyclist 1, Gunner 2; body armor, SMG. +2 to hit with SMG.

Crazy Jane Hickok: Cyclist 3, Gunner 0; body armor, lt. pistol.

Motor Morgan James: Cyclist 0, Gunner 0, Mech 3; body armor, hvy. pistol.

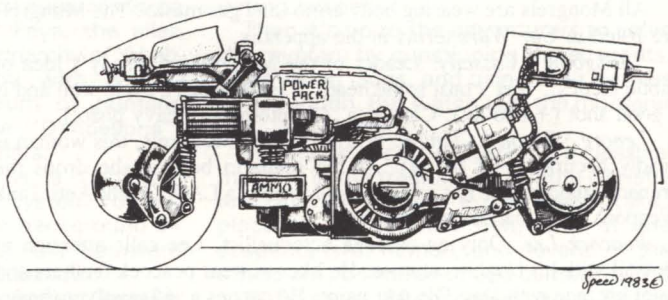
Bearclaw Tom Smith: Cyclist 0, Gunner 1; body armor, shotgun.

Snake Garrett: Cyclist 1, Gunner 0; body armor, hvy. pistol.

Johnny Deuce: Cyclist 0, Gunner 0; body armor, two hvy. pistols.

Austin Stoudenmeyer: Cyclist 0, Gunner 1; body armor, shotgun, lt. pistol.

George "Strongarm" Cusler: Cyclist 1, Gunner 1; body armor, hvy. pistol. +1 to hit with hvy. pistol.



MONGREL CHARACTERS

Longbow Cassady: Cyclist 1, Gunner 1; body armor, gas mask, hvy. pistol.

Lenore "Recon" Clanton: Cyclist 1, Gunner 2, Handgunner 2; body armor, gas mask, hand-held grenade launcher, LAW, lt. pistol.

Peacock Lee: Cyclist 1, Gunner 0; body armor, gas mask, hvy. pistol.

Sullen Cullen Baker: Cyclist 0, Gunner 0; body armor, gas mask, SMG.

Blackjack Plumber: Cyclist 0, Gunner 1; body armor, gas mask, rifle. +1 to hit with rifle.

Henry "Kid" McCarty: Cyclist 0, Gunner 0; body armor, gas mask, shotgun.

Bad Penny Deal: Cyclist 0, Gunner 0; body armor, gas mask, hvy. pistol. Note: +2 to hit in hand-to-hand combat.

Jake McLowry: Cyclist 0, Gunner 1, Mech 1; body armor, gas mask, lt. pistol.

JUNKYARD VEHICLES

Intimidator (modified): Station wagon, std. chassis, imp. suspension, super power plant, 4 PR tires (DP remaining: FR4, FL5, BR7, BL8), two linked MGs in turret (only eight shots apiece left), two extra magazines (empty), space for driver, two passengers or 300 lbs. cargo. Armor: F0, L6, R8, B25, T15, U9. HC 2, Accel. 10. Wt. 4740 lbs.

VanGo: Van, immobile because of no front wheels. Single MG in turret. Armor: F12, R4, L6, B3, T30, U15. Wt. 5000 lbs.

Stinger: Subcompact, hvy. chassis, hvy. suspension, small power plant, three HD tires (DP remaining: FL2, BR3, BL1), RR front, driver only. Armor: F4, R2, L0, B0, T0, U3. Accel. 5, HC 0 (because of the missing right front wheel). Wt. 2205 lbs.

Piranha: Luxury, hvy. chassis, hvy. suspension, large power plant, 4 PR tires (undamaged), driver and gunner. Three MGs with extra magazine each right, left, and back, empty RL front, fire extinguisher broken. Armor: F30, R25, L25, B30, T0, U20. Accel. 5, HC 3. Wt. 5645 lbs. Note: Top of vehicle *gone,* even hand weapon fire will penetrate interior if top is targeted.

Forklift: Accel. 2.5, HC 0, unarmored, top speed 10 mph, weight 3000 lbs. Can lift up to 2000 lbs.

SG

BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD

A FORMULA FOR DETERMINING UNIT COSTS IN OGRE/G.E.V.

BY HENRY COBB AND STEVE JACKSON

Most **Ogre** *fans enjoy experimenting with modifications of the standard armor units, and inventing brand-new ones. Unfortunately, the point-cost values of such new or modified units are often subject to debate. What is a Heavy Tank worth if you increase its attack strength by two? Does reducing its movement value by one MP compensate? How can you tell? The values for the original* **Ogre** *and G.E.V. games were set by extensive playtesting . . . very extensive playtesting.*

A number of gamers have speculated that there had to be a formula. I've always thought that there was, myself . . . but I never knew what it was! It appears that Henry Cobb has worked it out. We have tested his equation for assigning point cost values to **Ogre** *units. Not only does it work for the original units . . . it gives excellent results for the new Light GEV unit, which Henry didn't know about when he presented the original article!*

So . . . here it is. Now we need a formula for Ogres. Any suggestions?

—Steve Jackson

This algorithm gives a point cost value for any unit, defined in Ogre terms. All movement and combat abilities of the unit are taken into account. A numerical value, called "travel mode" (see below) is assigned to each unit on the basis of its ability to traverse different terrain types.

UNIT VALUES

The following abbreviations are used:

A: attack strength (the first number at the bottom of the counter).

D: defense strength (the number at the top left of the counter).

R: range (the second number at the bottom of the counter).

M1: the unit's movement during the first movement phase. If there is only one number at the top right of the counter, this is M1. If there are two numbers there, M1 is the first one.

M2: the unit's movement during the second movement phase. If there is only one number at the top right of the counter, M2 is zero. If there are two numbers there, M2 is the second one.

T: travel mode. This is the numerical expression of the vehicle's ability to handle terrain, as follows:

Heavy tracked vehicles (Heavy Tanks, and any other vehicles using the same column on the Terrain Chart: T = 0.5.

Ground-effect vehicles (GEVs of all types — anything that uses the G.E.V. column on the Terrain Chart): T = 0.3.

All other units, whether wheeled, tracked, or immobile: T = 0.

If a unit does not move in the second movement phase (i.e., M2 = 0), then a zero must be entered for the value of T in the second part of the algorithm.

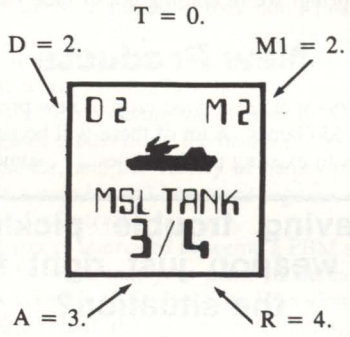
It should be obvious that, in general, the higher the travel mode number, the greater flexibility that unit has in dealing with terrain. GEVs have a lower number than heavy tracked vehicles because, though they can travel on water, they are badly limited in forest — and forest is much likelier to occur in an "average" campaign.

THE FORMULA

The algorithm itself is:

$$[A \times (R + M1 + T)] + [2D \times (R + M2 + T)].$$

Let's insert the values for the Missile Tank to see how it works out.



So the formula becomes:

$$[3 \times (4 + 2 + 0)] + [2 \times 2 \times (4 + 0 + 0)]$$

which simplifies to:

$[3 \times 6] + [4 \times 4]$ . . . or 18 + 16, or 34.

Applying the same formula to the other standard ***Ogre*** and ***G.E.V.*** units, we get the following values:

Heavy Tank = 34
Missile Tank = 34
Mobile Howitzer = 66
Light Tank = 18
G.E.V. = 33.8
Howitzer = 64

If these values are divided by 5.5, we get the following approximate values for victory points:

Heavy Tank = 6.2
Missile Tank = 6.2
Mobile Howitzer = 12
Light Tank = 3.3
G.E.V. = 6.15
Howitzer = 11.64

All of these values are close to those given in the rules; only one (the Howitzer) is off by

continued on p. 42

Where We're Going
by Steve Jackson

Game publishers dread winter . . . and not because of the cold. The game business is highly seasonal. Starting in March and April, sales get better every month until October and November. At that point, the stores have everything they need for Christmas, and sales cut off as though guillotined. December is bad; January worse. Then — for the survivors — orders start their long, slow climb once again, and the cycle starts over.

So winter is the time of year when publishers huddle in their caves, chewing on leftover mammoth bones and waiting for the warm season and better sales. What fun! But, now that it's spring, we're coming out of hibernation.

New Products

1984 will see a good crop of new products from SJ Games. A lot of these will be supplements to existing product lines . . . some will be brand-new. Let's take the supplements first.

Shockwave, the long-awaited expansion set for ***Ogre*** and ***G.E.V.***, is almost complete. (That's what I was working on whilst chewing my mastodon bone.) It will contain a rulebook, full-color map (designed to link to the ***G.E.V.*** map, and done in the same size and style), and counters. We also expect to be able to get *two* counter sheets in there. And, sometime around the end of the year, we hope to publish *The Ogre Book — Volume II.*

There will also be several new ***Car Wars*** items. ***Car Wars Expansion Set 5*** will be out by the time you read this . . . it's called the "Double Arena," and, as the name implies, includes two large-sized arena maps. Each is double-sided so you get *two* arenas. The gimmick is this: The two sides match up in different ways. One arena is roughly square, but the other is long and skinny. ***The AADA Vehicle Guide*** is sort of a "monster manual" for ***Car Wars*** — a compendium of armed vehicles. As a bonus, it will include tricycle and off-the-road rules. It ought to be out around Origins. ***Convoy*** is a solo adventure . . . a revised and greatly-expanded version of a scenario that appeared in *ADQ* 1. It and another, as-yet-unnamed, solo adventure should both be out a little bit after Origins. Finally, we're working on another *boxed* supplement, like ***Sunday Drivers*** or ***Truck Stop***. The working title is ***Racetrack***, though that may change. It's based on a freelance submission, and will cover high-speed racing and (at long last!) gasoline engines. It might just possibly make it to Origins. Then again, maybe not . . .

We also plan to publish Allen Varney's *GLOBBO* as a separate release — probably for Origins. It will almost certainly be in a "book" format, rather than in a Pocket Box package.

There will be several new sets of *Cardboard Heroes* miniatures during the year. In progress right now are two sets of dragons (big ones!) and a ***Champions*** set based on the villains in the two "Enemies" books.

New Material

Sometime around Origins, we'll bring out Greg Costikyan's ***Toon*** . . . a game of role-playing in the world of Saturday morning cartoons. This insane little system was originally slated for publication in *Fantasy Gamer* . . . but the more we played it, the more it had us rolling in the aisles. In ***Toon***, each player becomes a cartoon character, subject to the whims of the Animator and the laws of comic-strip physics. It is SILLY, and a lot of fun. Depending on magazine scheduling, I may drop some more hints next issue . . . or I may just let you wait for the final product.

GURPS may — or may not — be a 1984 release. Right now, the "Great Unnamed Role-Playing System" is back in the shop for repairs; I may end up pulling the whole combat system and dropping in a new one. One of my projects for the next month or so is to get all the existing GURPS material onto the computer, to make it easier to handle.

Licensed Products

A brief report on the progress of several products based on our games but being produced by other companies:

The ***Illuminati*** PBM game is coming along well. One of the playtest games is about 50% composed of SJ Games staffers, myself included. By the time you read this, the real games may have started. In the meantime, SJ Games is a hotbed of conspiracy. It's fun.

Origin Systems' computerized ***Autoduel*** (a version of ***Car Wars*** for Apple II+) and ***Ogre*** (for the Macintosh) may be out by Origins.

We are negotiating with a couple of established game companies about licensed ***Car Wars*** supplements. Nothing is final yet, though.

Other News

Our new offices are finished. This was not a move, but an expansion of our existing building; we added three private offices, a conference area, and a computer room (as well as an improved phone system). And our new typesetting system is up and running (see Chris Frink's column for more about that). All this represented quite an investment of both time and money, but it is already paying off; we are working more efficiently now that we have up-to-date equipment and don't have to sit in each other's laps. We may even buy one or two personal computers for the editorial offices.

Would you believe that the number of ***Car Wars*** items in print will probably reach the half-million mark during 1984?

Finally . . . if you haven't seen the new *Fantasy Gamer* (no. 5), then you just might want to look at it . . .

FINIEOUS IS BACK. **SG**

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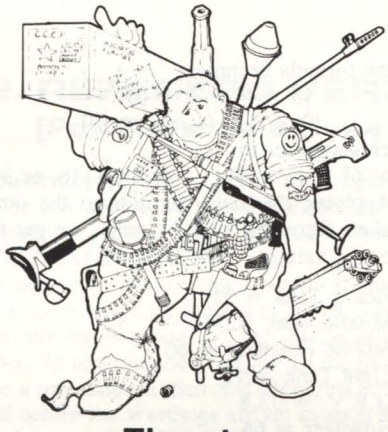

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SEE US IN BOOTH 311 AT ORIGINS

Counter Intelligence

by Chris Frink

I had just finished making my nominations for the 1983 Origins Awards and something was nagging me, but I couldn't figure out what. I went ahead and mailed the form even though it was still bugging me — what had I missed? On the way back from the Post Office it dawned on me — what was missing was a place on that ballot to nominate my favorite play-by-play games.

Back at the office, I scrounged up a blank nominations form. There was a category for every other form of "adventure" gaming: miniatures, computer, board, and role-playing. The ballot even had room to nominate magazines and RPG supplements. But *no* PBM category. It was as if the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts & Design had never heard of playing games by mail. The AAGA&D is the organization that oversees the awards; they've been trying to adapt the awards to keep pace with the changing scope of the gaming hobby. Now it's time for a PBM category.

Considering that ***Diplomacy*** has been played through the mail for almost 20 years, adventure gaming by mail has been around even longer than role-playing and computer gaming. PBM can't be written off as some sort of soon-to-be-forgotten fad. The gaming industry has come a long way from ***Diplomacy***, and so has PBM. It's a vital and innovative facet of the gaming hobby.

Cynics may say that PBM is just another way of playing boardgames, not a different kind of game. That is, of course, nonsense. Playing by mail allows concepts to be designed into a game — most notably limited intelligence and *real* simultaneous movement — that cannot be duplicated in a boardgame. Some may respond: "But computer games can do that." Yes, they can, and there is an award category for them. PBM games are no longer boardgames converted to postal play; they've grown away from their roots in much the same way role-playing games have grown away from miniatures rules.

Because PBM games are not as visible as other kinds of games — they don't line your hobby shop's shelves — they are all but unknown to those who don't play them. Non-PBMers don't realize how large this part of the hobby is. Considering the number of smaller, one-game moderators, the health of the larger companies, and the variety of games played, this is a popular and important segment of the gaming industry.

If you're interested in seeing a PBM award for 1984 write me, your game moderator, or the AAGA&D (P.O. Box 656, Wyandotte, MI 48192). I think the best bet is to mobilize the game moderators — they have more of an interest in a PBM award than anybody else.

On the Home Front

Big happenings here at SJ Games. We got a brand-spanking new, super-duper computer-controlled phototypesetting machine early in April. This sucker's big; it arrived in about two dozen pieces and took six people to unload. My back *still* aches. Now that it's up and running, this beautiful blue bundle of high-tech thing-a-ma-jigs (you can tell my orientation is not Computer Chip) is spitting out line after line of pristine copy. Compared to the system we used before, this monster is something — imagine trading in a '57 Plymouth on the starship *Enterprise.*

Unless you're familiar with typography, you may not notice much difference in the way the magazines look, but our production time is shorter — this baby is *fast* — and you should see magazines more regularly.

The other big news is our new upstairs offices are finally completed. They may not be real big, but the way we've been packed in around here, every little bit helps. Now that we aren't thinking like sardines so much anymore, we can spread our wings and really fly. And that means even better magazines. **SG**

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Space Gamer

In Issue 70 (July/August):

Marvel Super Heroes — a feature review of TSR's new super-powered RPG;

"The Fiction They Deserve," Charles Platt's controversial piece on "interactive fiction" (delayed from this issue);

A review of the ***Fleet Maneuvers*** PBM; and

A world made for skating.

Fantasy Gamer

In Issue 6 (June/July):

Avalon Hill is jumping into RPGs! Look for our feature review of ***Powers & Perils***, and previews of ***Lords of Creation, RuneQuest 3***, and *Heroes*, all in our first anniversary issue.

Also, ***Lost Inheritance***, a complete drop-in adventure;

Reviews of ***Bushido/Chivalry & Sorcery*** and ***Terra II***; and

Grundge.

Autoduel Quarterly

In Issue 6 (Summer 2034):

Badlands Run — a long, hot — and very mean — journey from Salt Lake to San Francisco. Full-scale adventure for those who liked ***Convoy***.

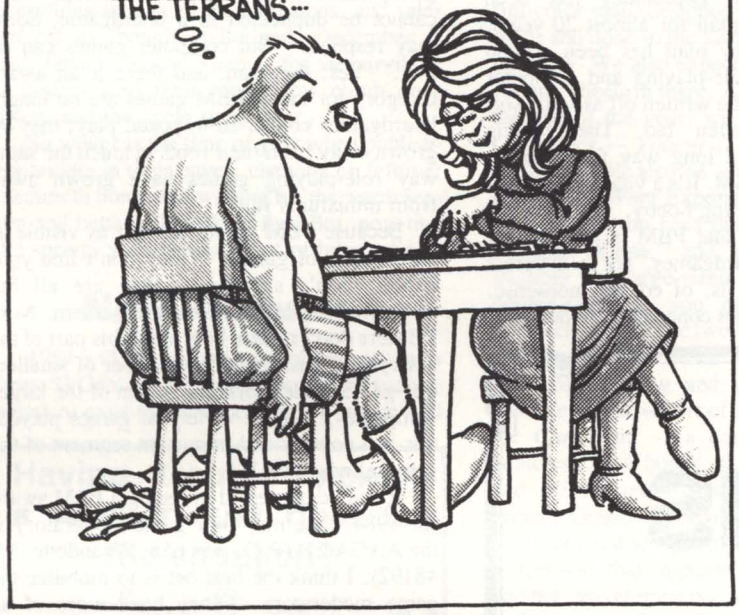
"Duel Master" — Steve Jackson tells how to referee a ***CW*** game effectively and efficiently;

"Amateur Night Tactics," AADA News, and the usual felgercarb.

MURPHY'S RULES PRESENTS...

GAMES THAT SHOULD NEVER BE PLAYED

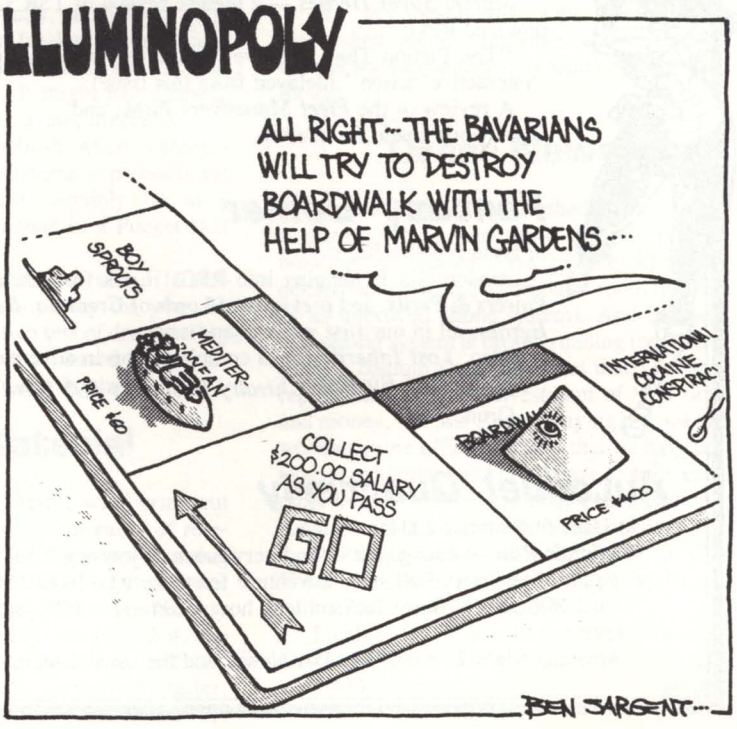
STRIP BERSERKER



BAR TREK

BUG-EYED BUNNIES

ILLUMINOPOLY



KEEPING POSTED

A Gentle Art: The Controversy Rages

The premiere of "Keeping Posted" (*SG* 67) featured an article by W.G. Armintrout, "A Gentle Art: Human-Moderated PBMs." The article discussed the good and bad points of that type of play-by-mail game. More specifically, the piece discussed the problems one player had with Schubel & Son's ***StarMaster*** and featured a letter of response from George Schubel (the company's president). The story concluded with an open invitation to *SG* readers: ". . . we do want to hear from you — especially, for the moment, on the subject of ***StarMaster*** — and if something is worth it, then we'll print it (along with a response from the company involved, if they have anything to say)."

I would *like* to say I was buried under an avalanche of mail full of arguments representing both sides of the issue, and commenting on a whole spectrum of games — but I wasn't. More than a few readers mentioned "Keeping Posted" in passing (they were happy to see a column devoted to PBM), but by the end of March (six weeks after *SG* 67 hit the stands) I had received all of four letters about ***StarMaster*** and one about another S&S game, ***Tribes of Crane***. All were long, detailed, well organized, and — most surprisingly — all were from disgruntled players outlining problems with the games.

Figuring that this small-but-vocal batch of letters was worth devoting a column to, I sent copies to Mr. Schubel along with an invitation to write a response that would run alongside the letters. He declined to respond to the points raised, but sent along a raft of letters he had received from satisfied players. (Some of these are printed below.) In the same day's mail with Mr. Schubel's packet were three more letters addressing the controversy — these from happy S&S players. These are also printed below.

I have a feeling this controversy isn't going to die with this issue. If you feel moved, write me; I want to hear about *any* segment of the PBM hobby. I can't promise how much room "KP" can devote to this in the future, but write. You may also want to write directly to Schubel & Son (and other PBM companies). Schubel & Son's address is: P.O. Box 214848, Sacramento, CA 95821.

Let's start with the three positive comments "KP" received:

Dear Mr. Armintrout:

I am writing about *SG* 67 and ***StarMaster***. I have been playing the game since the very start and I have not had any problems that were not quickly taken care of by the GMs. I think the game is well run. Why do you only print bad letters about play-by-mail games? This only hurts the hobby.

—Jim Michell
(no return address)

SG does not print only "bad letters" about the hobby. I hope the existence of this column shows that we are not "out to get" the PBM industry — we just want to air comments about the hobby. (You may want to read my column this issue to see what I think about PBM.)

—CF

If you think Schubel & Son has bad gamemasters, you should play Adventures By Mail's ***Beyond The Stellar Empire***. It is much worse than ***The Tribes of Crane*** or ***StarMaster***. I like ***Global Supremacy*** the best. Keep up the good work.

—Roy Simsome
(no return address)

*Roy, according to Jack Everitt of Adventures By Mail, you have never played **BSE**, so what do you base your judgement on?*

—CF

Mr. Armintrout:

In response to your request in *Space Gamer* number 67 for information about ***StarMaster***, I think ***StarMaster*** is one of the best play-by-mail games ever. I have been playing the game for several years and I think the gamemasters are *great*. I have had a few mistakes but they have always been taken care of very quickly. I have been very disappointed with other play-by-mail companies and I think Schubel & Son is very good.

—Jack Marcus
(no return address)

And now for the negative comments:

Dear Keeping Posted:

I am writing partly due to your request to hear from ***StarMaster*** players, and partly to let the person whose letter you published know he's not the only one to suffer misfortune at the hands of the ***SM*** gamemasters.

If S&S is doing such a good job at moderation, particularly in ***SM***, as Mr. George V. Schubel claims, why is there such a ludicrous amount of non-conformity between GMs, along with numerous [more than should be necessary] rule changes? For example, even after I knew that a rule had officially "changed," I was able to address my turns to certain GMs that I knew would still allow me to do what I wanted.

Schubel & Son also uses a series of "gimmicks" to pump additional dollars out of hapless players. The terms "Dark Shapers" and "Absorbtion [sic] Globes" immediately pop into mind. In issue number 35 of the ***StarMaster*** newsletter, Mr. Schubel shrugged off any accusations and insisted these "marauder attacks" were: "1) To help prod inactive players into becoming active again; 2) Increase revenue to help cover the costs of maintaining inactive positions; and 3) To clear out players who have left without notifying us (S&S)."

The overall impression was that if you remained active, the "marauders" wouldn't bother you. That has got to be the biggest crock! In one day, two of my friends and I were hit by "Dark Shapers" and we were by no means inactive by their definition — no turns sent in for over two months. After talking with five or six other *active* players, I found they had suffered this atrocity also. You would at least think they'd do a good job moderating such an incident — guess again. The GM's response to my actions must have taken five minutes to write and they only repeated what I said.

—Chris Tisone
Anaheim, CA

This next letter mentions a strange problem no one else did: gamers raiding Schubel & Son's trash.

Dear Mr. Armintrout:

I have just finished reading . . . "A Gentle Art" . . . it was most interesting, and for once I am in complete agreement that a PBM company can't continue to "jack" its players around and expect them to remain in the game. The purpose of this letter is to relate my experiences in Schubel & Son's . . . ***StarMaster***. The major problem with ***StarMaster*** is that their record-keeping is very poor and this leads to some major problems for everyone in the game. Here are some (other) problems I had in ***StarMaster*** before I dropped the game:

If I wrote a complex Special Action I would get a GM response like: "Yes," "OK," or "Noted." The only problem is that it was rarely noted, acted upon, or entered in my records. I don't think it's too much to ask for an intelligent answer to an intelligent question.

Per the record-keeping problem: My allies and I soon found out that a fleet of ships sent to a space without a star system was not recorded at S&S, and it was up to the player to keep track of the fleet. I would create phantom fleets and attack obnoxious players. Many times these non-existent fleets would wipe out a player's position and the GMs never did anything about it or caught on to what was going on.

Another problem area that has always bothered me about S&S games is being attacked by a

gamemaster-controlled force. The force was never large enough to do me any harm, but it always cost me $3.50. It makes no sense to me to have this type of thing going on; it does nothing for the players but I believe it generates extra income for S&S.

Finally, S&S would not return a player's production turn sheet, which had the player's Homeworld location and tech level on it. Now this may seem bizarre, but a group of gamers in the Sacramento area would visit . . . the S&S offices and go through the trash. I know this to be true, since I received from these players *my own* original production sheets and interesting information about my enemies. I began to feel that I didn't have as much control over my destiny as I would have liked and . . . I dropped from the game.

There are many other S&S players who have had the same experiences with S&S, ***StarMaster***, and [the last] item in particular which, in my opinion, is unspeakably gross negligence. I only hope that they will write and tell you about it.

—Douglas Bagwell
Bettendorf, IA

Jerry Dickerson played Schubel & Son's ***Tribes of Crane****, but had the same kind of problems the* ***StarMaster*** *players did, so I decided to run his letter.*

Hello Mr. Armintrout:

I was deeply into PBM games for several years until I finally quit (went cold turkey) about two years ago. In that time I had risen fairly high in Schubel & Son's ***Tribes of Crane***. During that time I had the chance to talk to many of the highest players. I heard more than a few complaints to the effect that the GM was playing god more than he should. As was said in ["A Gentle Art"], the majority of these sounded fantastic and few people had proof.

The thing that interested me about this latest presentation was the difference between the two letters. The anonymous person listed facts about his turns and the way in which they were handled. On the other hand, if we analyze Mr. Schubel's letter we get something completely different. The first two sentences (the shortest paragraph of the letter) tried to answer the other letter by saying he would have someone check into it and try to take care of it. He seems to have casually found a way of not answering the question of GM interference; the rest of the letter is filled with statements on how he feels his games and gamemasters are the best in the business.

This type of response to the accusation of GM interference is typical. I'm afraid that it is also the only smart answer. Let's face facts, the majority of the people who run PBM games are out to make money. It would be extremely bad for business to admit that you tamper with certain people's turns. This is not to say that Schubel & Son do or do not tamper with turns; I am only saying that it would be insane to say that you do.

Since you wish to know what people think about PBM games in general, I have one final comment:

Mr. Schubel states, "***StarMaster*** grosses more turn fees than any other PBM game of any type." This I do not doubt since it is A) the most expensive game in the field, and B) it comes from the company with the most hidden costs in the business. These are the two reasons I finally quit Schubel & Son games.

I hope these observations help in some way. Some of it comes from looking back a couple of years, but at least you can be assured they are not from someone who is angry over their latest turn.

—Jerry Dickerson
Shell Beach, CA

The next writer (who asked that we not print his name and address) makes the point that he has ***fun*** *playing* ***SM****, but that the game has* ***some*** *problems.*

Mr. Armintrout:

I have played ***StarMaster*** for approximately three and one-half years. One problem that players have is ghost ships. If a battle occurs, it is quite likely that what the gamemasters have for your forces are not what you have. People have had ghost ships fight for them many times over. You could have a dozen ships be destroyed and next turn they'd still be there. Sometimes this is advantageous, especially if you're defending a planet. All this is poor record-keeping.

Some gamemasters do not do what you order them to. This seems especially true if you are doing exploration. If you order a planet map (which is a map of the surface terrain of the planet), you may instead get a reply that says "No aliens sighted" or you may get an orbital scan, which is not a planet map. You usually end up having to explore that planet again on your next turn.

Now on the impartiality of the gamemasters: They aren't very impartial. If you get along well with the GM, you can be assured of a good turn. If you don't get along, they can screw up your turn. I can say that some gamemasters are impartial and fair. But it still helps to get along with the GM.

Some things that burn players are certain special encounters that are forced on the player. The Absorbtion [sic] Globe Threat is an example. The Gammau Cybernauts is another. Many players feel that S&S does these to obtain some money. Many players feel that they are not worth the time and money.

I really think that S&S can improve on record-keeping and following the orders of the players better. Perhaps they should send out a survey to see what the players want. I mean, the players are the ones who spend their money to play the game. Perhaps they should have some say in the game.

StarMaster is a fun game to play. There are lots of possibilities in the game. It is open to expansion where new things can be done, but there is room for improvement. It does cost more than most games and some of the money spent is not worth it; other times the money is worth it. It is a good game, but you have to get into it.

—name withheld by request

The next author is most qualified to comment on ***StarMaster*** *— he wrote a fine strategy piece on the game in* ***SG*** *65. Here he offers some concrete suggestions on how the game can be improved.*

Readers of *SG* may recognize my name from the "So You Wanna Be a ***StarMaster***" article of last fall. In that piece, I gave suggestions on how to get started in ***SM*** (an appropriate acronym . . .) and a little on what to look out for. Because I *was* writing a strategy article and not a full analysis of the game, the overall tone of the article was positive. Though I still hold to some of the favorable remarks in the piece, if I wrote it today it would probably be titled "You Really *Wanna* be a ***StarMaster***???"

The complaints Gamer X put forth in his letter to Mr. Armintrout in issue 67 are not exaggerated, though it is rare to suffer such problems as frequently as Mr. X. I played the game for over three and a half years before I began to run into such problems. It was shortly before the "So You Wanna . . ." article came out that the straws that broke the camel's back arrived in the mail. One turn's results contained so many dumb mistakes and "gloss-overs" that I began to quit (read: getting my forces ready to receive a new leader and finding a buyer for my empire). I went from mildly enthusiastic about the game to quite bitter. If S&S couldn't deliver, I saw no reason to continue playing.

I am not surprised that ***StarMaster*** is a popular game. Even when players learn that the S&S ads are deceptive and a healthy number quit, enough fanatics remain to make the game succeed. I spent years scribbling economic forecasts on desks during calculus classes, collecting masses of newsletters, and making deals with real cash for ***StarMaster*** play money. But almost every ***SM*** player that I've known reaches a point of frustration no matter how big and successful his/her empire gets.

Schubel & Son's big problem is also their biggest advantage: gamemasters. GMs make the game personal and allow more creativity on the part of the players. They also get paid more for doing more turns per hour and seemingly know less about the game than players. Many times I've asked for information, or tried to do things announced as possible months before in the newsletter, only to have the request ignored. Mistakes made were often *corrected* incorrectly, if at all. I am sure that none of the GMs ever act maliciously, but when a carefully drafted special action is ignored, or marked "noted" and then not implemented, it is not surprising that players get fed up and quit. S&S should either promise less to begin with, make standardized Special Actions, or lessen the load on GMs by computerizing things like trade and movement.

Lest I let S&S entirely off the hook, one of the things that made me quit was a "Special Encounter." This was a sheet describing an event, with a space to write a special action in response. In my case, the encounter was with a wrecked ship on the surface of a newly discovered planet that shot at all who approached with its anti-meteor defenses. The sheet also suggested using the back of the sheet if my Special Action was very long. I took S&S at

their word and made a neatly typed 200-plus word action complete with a diagram of what I was doing and why. I also described what my forces on the scene would do to decipher the ship's computer records, techniques to learn the vessel's high-tech secrets, and so on. What I got in return was a Megakill weapon I could have built myself, and $3.50 taken off my account. This was insulting as well as a rip-off. I doubt that my SA was even read. Getting a standardized response for an hour's work and $3.50 incensed me *muy mucho*. Schubel & Son should be ashamed to pass this off as an "optional" turn sheet provided for greater enjoyment. I used to think that the key to enjoying ***SM*** was using one's imagination and getting back what was put in. Pah!

If Schubel & Son does not do a drastic overhaul of the way they handle ***SM***, they should be boycotted. Computerization of routine functions and dropping rip-offs like "Special Encounters" might be expensive in the short run, but a better game will result, and players might stay longer.

Ah! I see that a "StarMaster II" has been announced. I hope that Mr. Schubel has taken suggestions like those I've given above to heart. Perhaps he will write a piece for "Keeping Posted" to keep us posted on this new game?

—Stefan Jones
Locust Valley, NY

And now for some more positive views. Here is a selection of the letters addressed to S&S that George Schubel sent ***Space Gamer****:*

Dear Mr. Schubel:

I congratulate you on the excellent game that you have worked so hard on for the past two years. ***StarMaster*** is, without doubt, the best play-by-mail game in existence and I foresee Flying Buffalo in great difficulty from the competition Schubel & Son is providing them in the play-by-mail field.

The Gamemasters are fair, efficient, and perhaps the greatest asset to your company, and I honestly believe that they take personal pride and interest with each turn processed.

Your hard work has not gone unnoticed. Turn-around time has decreased dramatically, errors are less frequent. Overall the game has continued to improve noticeably over the past two years.

My warmest thanks for providing me with the enjoyment and excitement that ***StarMaster*** has provided me.

—Todd Travis

Dear Mr. Schubel:

I have been a player in your ***StarMaster*** game now for almost a year and would like to take this opportunity to thank you personally for the quality and satisfaction your game has displayed.

It is rare today to find the enthusiasm and attention to detail that is the hallmark of your GMs. It is a genuine pleasure for me to address questions to your GMs and know that I will get a prompt and accurate response. My special thanks go to Lori Goerlich — she does a *terrific* job of getting my questions/comments back to me in a professional way.

I wish you the best of luck and continuing success with ***StarMaster***.

—Steven Strunkel

Greetings:

Tribes of Crane is an excellent play-by-mail game. Superior by far than any currently offered. My thanks for a job well done.

—Raymond Winslow

Dear Debbie:

Thank you so much for taking the time to explain the evaluation, and for being so thoughtful and polite in your reply. You have given me further insight into the Gamemastering process, and I can re-think my special actions in a new light.

After reading your explanation, I no longer have any complaint about it, since it was really my [vague] wording which was *really* at fault. From now on, I will try to be more specific about things.

I would like to tell you that it is *Gamemasters* like you that make Schubel & Son one of the best in the business! Again, thank you for taking the time and trouble to give me such a thoughtful reply to my complaint. It was much appreciated!

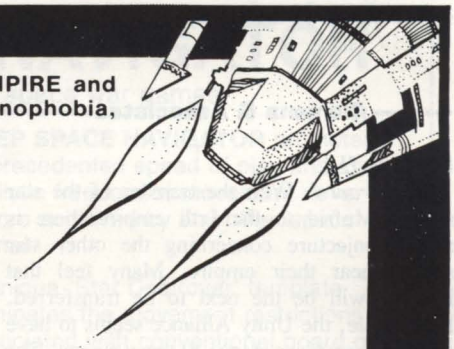
—John Phillips

And there it is, a controversy that has no firm resolution. Our job at ***SG*** *is not to take sides, but to provide a forum, or soapbox, where people can air their views. I hope that "Keeping Posted" will get some of the people involved in PBM — from gamers to gamemasters — thinking about this part of the gaming hobby.* ***We*** *don't have any answers; we do have space for gamers to offer* ***their*** *answers. "KP" is also a place for PBM gamers — and gamemasters — to* ***ask*** *questions, the sorts of questions raised about* ***StarMaster*** *and Schubel & Son. But I think we have heard about enough about this particular issue, at least for now — we need to get on to other aspects of the hobby. "Keeping Posted" will not degenerate into a soapbox for disgruntled people to get up and vent their spleens — PBM needs a place for intelligent* ***discussion****. I hope "KP" can be that place.* —CF

SG

First we brought you over 30,000 turns of BEYOND THE STELLAR EMPIRE and WARBOID WORLD. Now we introduce our new Play By Mail game of Xenophobia, Conquest, and Space Warfare called . . .

CAPITOL

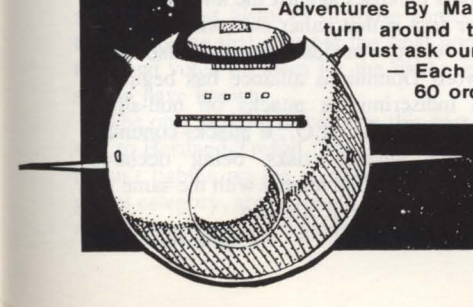


CAPITOL *Features* —

— A strategic space warfare game, completely computer moderated.
— Approximately 100 players per game.
— Players design their race's characteristics and description.
— Design your own starships and build them at your star bases.
— Expand your empire and conquer other races.
— An "advanced stage" of the game introduces new technologies of stargates and improved ship movement capabilities.
— CAPITOL's simplified order formats are easy to remember. No coding your orders onto computer cards or other gimmicks.
— CAPITOL has an easy to understand rule book, complete with numerous examples.
— CAPITOL was subjected to the largest playtest of ANY commercial PBM game. Over 100 players played 1500 turns of CAPITOL prior to its release.
— Adventures By Mail has been providing continuous 48 hour turn around time for all our games since July, 1981. Just ask our players!
— Each turn of Capitol costs $2.50 for the first 60 orders. Each additional 30 orders costs $1.00.

"CAPITOL is fast becoming the standard against which other space warfare games are compared"

— With each rule book you receive a set of overlays to use in mapping the game and moving your ships.
— Mapping CAPITOL is extremely interesting, using the computer printed maps you receive with your turn results.
— No due dates. CAPITOL allows you three turns per month. Most other computer moderated games have the usual one turn every three weeks (approximately).
— Capitol is a balanced game. Each player may buy a maximum of two setups per game.



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KEEPING POSTED PBM Update

Emprise Game Systems

Company News:

Emprise is pleased to announce the acquisition of the fully computer-moderated, grand strategic-level space game, ***Galactic Imperium*** from Simulations Unlimited of Georgia. The five existing games of ***Galactic Imperium*** have been terminated. Former S.U. customers will be informed by mail about the opportunity of obtaining refunds from Emprise. ***Galactic Imperium*** will now enter a two-year period of redesign, reprogramming, and testing before it is re-released.

The Assassin's Quest (a computer-moderated, tactical-level, space PBM recently acquired from DeJager and Co. of Canada) has completed initial re-design and is being reprogrammed. We hope to begin testing soon.

Emprise's original product, ***Warp Force One***, has been renamed ***Warp Force Empires*** and is undergoing the final third of its playtest regime. The game features a revolutionary new interplayer communication system that is expected to put all players on an equal footing (despite differences in geographic location and size of gaming budget), add to the fun, and save a bundle in diplomacy costs.

—Steve Gray

Clemens & Associates

Universe II

Quadrant I: With the transfer of the star system Mufrid to the Ixtli empire there is much conjecture concerning the other star system near their empire. Many feel that Diadem will be the next to be transferred. Meanwhile, the Unity Alliance seems to have adopted a cautious stance to these events. The UES starships are again showing signs of renewed hope under the leadership of the UES *Suvarov*.

Quadrant II: The rumored advance of the Ixtli battle fleet seems to have been premature. This respite has given the UES forces time to rebuild after the losses suffered during the unsuccessful defense of Alula. It is impossible to say with any certainty what will transpire within the next few weeks as no clear movement of battlegroups is evident.

Quadrant III: The CSA/E Alliance continues to recruit new members and is growing in strength. Little conflict has been reported between major alliances. Each seems to be in a period of rebuilding as opposed to expanding territorial claims. There are constant rumors that the survivors of the Muar Empire which was crushed by the UES last year are now joining the Alar Empire.

Quadrant IV: Resurgence of the forces loyal to the Sunbane has placed most of the colonies of the quadrant in jeopardy of attack. Their ships have been sighted in many areas, with their movements directed toward one general area. Meanwhile, starships of the STA Alliance are also on the move, but their purpose is not as obvious.

Quadrant XXI: Gysarme is still the center of activity in this quadrant. With no colonial activity as yet, the majority of the starship commanders are cautiously exploring the dozen uncivilized star systems which lie within two time-periods' travel from Gysarme. Several starships have begun the long trek to the far side of the quadrant to join forces with the Cetusville Alliance of the Regajian Empire. It is only a matter of time before the empires grow strong enough to begin expansion.

Quadrant IE: Both the Regajian and Ixtli Empires are growing in membership. With more assertive leadership they will become a viable threat to the increasingly prosperous, but weakly defended, UES colonies that have been established. The time is coming in this quadrant when organized forces will rule certain areas.

Quadrant IIE: The starships captained by Australian commanders have begun to find the Etuel star systems in their immediate areas. It is expected that they will consolidate their position before exploring farther into the quadrant. There are strong rumors that the starships captained by English commanders in this quadrant are joining the Regajian Empire and plan to make it an impregnable bastion from which to conquer the remainder of the quadrant.

—Jon Clemens

Adventures By Mail

Capitol

C1: Ivaka has increased its lead mainly by completing the devastation of large areas of the Quman empire, and together with the Sleen and Albion, may completely wipe the Qumans from the galaxy. Several of the smaller races have had some success recently; the Pakalolo, Scorians and Edoran have increased their empires by 20%, while some of the larger empires (Chatan, Sleen, Aldryami, Grognards, and Kzinti) decreased in size.

C2: Almost every player has had one or more battles as they fight for the rich border worlds. The Ettinites' and Weebles' lead has decreased sharply. The Chosen, currently in last place, are catching up quickly, and every race now owns a comparative number of worlds. The Stellar Knights, after losing a bunch of ships, quickly executed their revenge, much to the chagrin of their neighbors. Many Capitol locations have been learned, causing invasion plans to be formed.

C3: Just underway. The New Zyx Empire grabbed a small lead — probably because their players are the most experienced.

Beyond The Stellar Empire

The alien race known as the Catrark struck back at USS First Fleet in the Lemke star system. The new Catrark fleet succeeded in destroying the *USS Leucippu*, severely damaged the *USS Solstice*, and blew up three shuttle-sized ground parties. Of note was the appearance of a stronger Disruptor (the Catrark space weaponry), possibly modified based on their recent combat experiences.

The affiliation known as the Raiders of the Imperial Periphery (RIP) continues to grow and has become quite a threat in recent weeks. In fact, every week they derelict and capture at least one ship. This is causing problems for the Imperial Stellar Patrol, as the Flagritz War has already forced them to extend themselves farther than they would have liked.

Periphery Directors Lamb of the SSL and Relav of the FET recently appealed the postings of two ships. However, the appeal to ISP Periphery Director Lask has not changed anything — yet. The new ISP posting officer, Commander Ernst Von Amin of the *ISP Courageous*, is investigating the situation. The two ships posted are the *SSL Mantis* and *FET Tar-falas*, and their crime was bombarding a GTT ground party which was attacking the colony IND Yert's Glory, the two ships' ally.

—Jack B. Everitt

Schubel & Son

Star Venture

In a savage encounter, the destroyer *Vulture* wreaked havoc on an undisclosed planet. The attack was in retaliation for the recent attack and capture of the allied colony High Lifter. The *Vulture* launched repeated star fighter attacks first against the ground party Revenge, inflicting heavy losses. The *Vulture* then proceeded to attack and destroy the transport (a rare and expensive ship class) *Klan Korii*. Finally the *Vulture* attacked and destroyed the medium freighters *Depot V.*, *K.E. Market* and the destroyer *Zebra 1*; in addition, the destroyer *Zebra 2* was heavily damaged. The destroyer *A.A. Utah*, sister ship of the *Vulture*, then proceeded to bombard the defenses of the colony High Lifter with guided missiles.

Horizons End!

The Terran Federation is once again increasing in strength as many new groups are swelling the ranks of the self-proclaimed leaders of mankind. This rapid growth is creating friction with the Asgardian Empire, another rapid-growing alliance in the same general area. Disputes over territory have resulted in one group of Terran commanders to declare war on the Asgardians. Critics advocate peace talks as a means of solving the conflict, as they see the war only as weakening mankind's defenses against the alien Xlashen. Another fear is that either side will break the ban and resort to nuclear weapons. Elsewhere the Sword Dominions alliance has begun to launch indiscriminate attacks on non-allied groups near Terran H.Q.; if attacks continue, the entire alliance risks being declared renegade and will be hunted with the same intensity as are the evil Xlashen.

—Duane Wilcoxson

Letters

Dear Sir,

It is very important that gamers and gaming companies start petitioning the Origins committees now to correct some of the injustices in the Origins award system. While I'm sure what has happened was unintentional, the result has been to make Origins look like it wants to cater to big companies and let small ones go under and foreign ones go ignored.

Here's what I'm talking about:

Avalon Hill won an award for ***Civilization*** at Origins '83. The game deserved an award. But Avalon Hill's Tom Shaw, in the January-February 1983 issue of *Fire & Movement*, noted that *Avalon Hill did not develop the game*! That was done by the fine old English firm Hartland-Trefoil. AH just got the license to produce it in this country. Why didn't the award (along with an invitation to set up a booth at this year's Origins) go to Hartland-Trefoil?

AH was allowed to have nominations in the Fantasy Boardgame category for ***Titan*** and ***The Legend of Robin Hood***, yet AH did not devise either game! In the same article mentioned earlier, Shaw noted that the ***Robin Hood*** game was a reissue of an OSG game. And in *The General*, he acknowledged that ***Titan*** was a reissue of another firm's game. I feel AH was given a free ride by being allowed two nominations in one category for games it did not design. There's nothing wrong with reissuing old, defunct games — I'm glad Avalon Hill does it and I wish TSR would do more of it with SPI games — but there should be a separate category for something like that.

Origins needs to stop letting any firm have expansion kits nominated in the new games category. If need be, a category can be set up for Best Expansion Kits. It was ludicrous two years ago when ***Crescendo of Doom*** won the award for Best 20th Century Boardgame. That was just an expansion kit for ***Squad Leader***. But it was even worse to allow Avalon Hill a nomination under 20th Century Game for ***G.I.: Anvil of Victory***. That's almost an expansion kit of an expansion kit, needing three other games to play it.

I realize many gamers who nominated the above games were not aware of the circumstances or past histories of those games, but the committee that sent out the final nominations and voted on them for the final winners should have known.

The only real injustice done this past year was to Hartland-Trefoil. But if the committee doesn't tighten up the standards for the new games category, abuses could get worse as AH and TSR reissue more games.

And here's the bad part, at least according to the list or Origins winners for 1983: It appears that Origins decided, or at least gave the appearance of deciding, to help force small firms out of business by depriving them of their one source of recognition — the category of Initial Boardgame Release.

With that category gone, new firms will have a harder time getting publicity and selling their games. They may go under and then have their games bought out by Avalon Hill. Then, with a boost from unknowing gamers and an Origins committee that should know better, AH could be nominated for a game that was ignored when a smaller firm first issued it.

The possibility for future scandal and injustice is high. The Origins folks need to prevent this by: 1) establishing a category to honor either new designers or new companies; 2) setting up a category for Best Expansion Kit; 3) setting up a category for Best Reissue of a game; and 4) giving new game awards to the firm that designed the game, not just the one that licenses it in this country.

Steve LaPrade
Norman, OK

You seem to be singling out Avalon Hill for criticism, Steve; is that because they are so large, or because they are the first to come to mind? You raise many interesting points, most sure to draw some kind of response. (This is my kind of letter.)

I firmly agree with your stand against having expansion sets nominated in the game category. By definition, they are **not** *games and should not compete against them. I'm not so sure, however, that they should have their own category. You are right in saying that the company that originally designed a game should receive credit for that game if it is honored with a nomination or award — but only if the company that did the re-releasing made* **no** *improvements.*

I can't see the reason why there should be a category for new designers or companies. Can't they compete with everybody else? There must be some arguments for the other side of this, but I haven't heard them.

The members of the Origins Awards Committee are some folks that may want to hear your arguments, too, Steve. You noted that they have been open to change in the past; they should be open to suggestions now. (Write them c/o MDG, P.O. Box 656, Wyandotte, MI 48192.)

—CF

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The staff will make reasonable efforts to check reviews for factual accuracy, but opinions expressed by reviewers are not necessarily those of the magazine.

Games and game items for which *Space Gamer* is seeking reviews include ***Ace of Clubs, Battlecars, Burned Bush Wells, Campaign Trail, Cosmic Balance II — The Strategic Game, Death in Spades, Dramune Run, Famine in Far-Go, Fasolt in Peril, Gamelord, Hammer's Slammers, High Ranger Guard, Lightning Bolts and Lasers, Mutiny on Eleanor Moraes, Operation Fastpass, Operation Guardian, Range War, Space Cowboy, Space Race, Star Fleet Battle Manual, Star Frontiers Character Record Sheets, Star Sector Atlas 2, Starship Captain***, and ***Sundown on Starmist***.

GAMES

Alien Contact (Phoenix Enterprises Ltd., now defunct); $22.00. Designed by Fred Chatham. Components include a four-page rulebook, 352 die-cut counters, one 22" x 28" mounted color mapboard, 52 random event cards, and seven play-aid cards. Requires one 10-sided die, not included. Playing time three to six hours. For two to six players. Published 1983.

Alien Contact is a strategic science fiction game of "Space Imperialism," in the tradition of ***Stellar Conquest*** and ***Imperium***. The "Council of Six" has agreed to divide a large volume of space according to the outcome of some stylized warfare — a ludicrous rationale intended to justify players' identical starting forces. Units include space marines, ships, stations, and pirate ships. Movement and combat are based on the units' tech levels; cross-indexing the tech levels of a firing ship and its target on the Combat Results Table gives a range of "to hit" numbers to roll on a 10-sided die. A production phase gives resource points based on the number and variety of stars controlled, and includes random events and diplomacy.

This is a big, colorful game that gets high marks for component quality. The mounted mapboard is sturdily constructed. The resource and production rules are about the best part of the game: In an imaginative twist, the value of a star depends on the color of the counter (i.e., which alien race) the controlling player is using. Each player has a different star card, with point values and atmospheric data for each star color that differs from those on other players' cards. This makes negotiation and strategy more complex, and players must always be aware that opponents' goals don't match their own.

Diplomacy requires diplomat counters, which must occupy the same space in order for their owning players to negotiate. But the rules provide for capture and ransom of diplomats, and the ransom can hurt the enemy more than taking away a handful of his stars. The ransom rules lead to a

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distracting sideshow of kidnapping diplomats to cripple opponents. Also, the rules in general could have been tightened up. Be prepared to make inferences, guess at implications, and do a lot of reading between the lines.

Alien Contact is an honest effort, and certainly not the sort of unmitigated turkey that all too often winds up on the game store shelves, but it's not particularly innovative or exciting. If you don't mind plunking down 20-plus dollars on a game that is just OK, then this might be a good choice. More discriminating players should seek to play out their imperialistic ambitions through a more suitable vehicle.

—Tony Watson

IRON HORSE (Icarus Games); $9.98. Designed by Rosemarie K. Geier. Contains two decks of cards. Released 1983.

Iron Horse is a family game for two to eight people which represents "an era in history when much of America's vast railroad network was divided into great continent-spanning systems." Players select cards from the "Rolling Stock" deck until they can form a train composed of an engine, a "crew car" (caboose), and from two to four cars. There are three types of engines; the smallest, an American 4-4-0, can only pull two cars (besides the caboose), while the largest, a Mikado 2-8-2, can haul up to four.

Once each player has a train, the game begins. Players alternate drawing from an "Operations deck" which contains commodities to be carried from city to city as well as the cities between which the goods are carried and various hazards and benefits. The first city a player draws is his starting city; he then draws Operations cards, following instructions on hazards and benefits and collecting goods to be transported. The player may only carry passengers on a passenger train, may only carry freight on a freight train and may not mix types of goods within each car (i.e., you can't ship iron ore and dry goods in the same car).

When the player draws another destination card he is assumed to take his goods to that city; the goods are unloaded and the player scores points according to the types of merchandise delivered and the cities it is delivered to. The first player to reach 500 points wins.

Iron Horse is fun. It is by no means an accurate simulation of anything; in fact, it has some rather ludicrous events that defy reality. But it is meant to be a simple, family game, and in that it succeeds. My son and daughter (ages 7 and 9) like the game so much they bullied me into buying a copy.

Icarus Games, though, has a problem with its physical components. The production work in ***Iron Horse*** is adequate, but the cards are printed on about sixty-pound index card stock and with care should last through three dozen playings. I recommend the game, but those of us who prefer a more challenging railroad simulation should stick to ***Rail Baron*** or ***Empire Builder*** (or HO layouts). Anyone who comes to play without thoroughly washing and drying his hands should be tied up and left on the track in front of a speeding freight train.

—Creede Lambard

MACH — THE FIRST COLONY (Alliance Publications); $18.00. Designed by Michael Lange. Two 32-page rulebooks, one 16-page scenario book, boxed. For moderator and several players; playing time variable. Published 1983.

Mach — The First Colony is Alliance Publications' first venture into the role-playing market. Subtitled "A role-playing game of soldiers of fortune in a New World," ***Mach*** is primarily a low-tech SF game with some trappings of fantasy. While firearms, spiced with a sprinkling of alien weapons, are available, lower-tech weapons — swords, axes, bows — are common, too. "Magic" exists in the form of alien psionics. And there are monsters afoot as well — the alien flora and fauna of the new world, Mach. The game rationale is that, because a supernova is about to ravage our section of the galaxy, some 6,000,000 Earth humans with minimal livestock and equipment (and whatever weapons they could smuggle) have been transported to safety on the planet Mach by the Abla, a super-race of "philanthropists." Three other humanoid races — the hulking Bane, the psionic Palir, and the externally fair (but treacherous) Tofus — have been saved by the Abla as well to share the new world with its natives, the Machics. However, the Abla fail to join those they've rescued, leaving the survivors to fend for themselves. A fifth group of refugees, the truly alien, six-tentacled "Tracks," arrives on its own, adding to the racial potpourri on Mach. Actual play begins several generations later, after the overthrow of a Tofu tyranny. Player characters may be of any race except the remaining outlaw Tofus — even a Track if they make the roll. Characters are built on nine fairly standard attributes, mostly rolled on 3d6 with variations for race and sex.

Mach's most appealing aspect is its concept. Its low-tech SF theme hasn't been overworked the way some SF ideas have (though the game has vague points of similarity to the old fantasy game ***Empire of the Petal Throne*** — different races together on a planet as the result of a past disaster, etc.). Also, the game is quite detailed, for those who like that, in character generaton, combat, and other areas. Many of the alien creatures of Mach are of interest too, as are several of the alien gadgets of the Track and other races — I rather like the Tofu "whirl blade," a sort of mechanized "pizza-cutter" hand weapon.

There are problems in the game: The weapons table, for example, includes an "M1 carbine rifle," later described as a "bolt-action rifle." Huh? The designer, too, seems overly fond of the term "class" — there are armor classes, weapon classes, struc-

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tural damage classes, etc., with what could be a confusing array of numbers and letters. I also found the equipment lists a bit sparse, except for weapons. Other problems I have with the system are due to personal preferences, so they may not be problems for others. I don't like the concept of armor class determining *whether or not* a character is hit, rather than simply protecting him *after* he's hit. I prefer systems in which skills increase with successful use, as in ***RuneQuest***, to games which raise skills by general experience points earned for adventuring. Also, the game is just a bit *too* complex in most areas for my own taste.

Those players who like complex, highly detailed games — players of systems such as ***Space Opera, Chivalry & Sorcery***, and ***Aftermath*** — might find ***Mach*** worth its $18 price. Admirers of simpler systems, such as ***The Fantasy Trip, Star Trek*** or ***Call of Cthulhu***, should probably pass this one up.

—William A. Barton

SUPPLEMENTS

THE GREAT SUPER-VILLAIN CONTEST (Hero Games); $5.95. Designed by Dennis Mallonee, edited by Aaron Allston. Adventure for ***Champions***. One 8½" x 11" 32-page book. Illustrated. Published 1984.

Not so much a single adventure as an ongoing "sub-plot" or even a campaign background, this fourth module for ***Champions*** deals with a massive competition among all the world's super-villains. The mysterious Crimson Claw has offered the incalculably powerful Emerald Eye of Azog to the single villain who proves himself most powerful of all. This book outlines ways for the referee to gradually introduce the contest into his campaign background, bring it slowly to the players' awareness, and many ways to resolve it. You get the "rules" for the three rounds of the contest, a remarkably clear explication of the Crimson Claw's secret interdimensional base (located in the hills of Burbank, California), and complete statistics on the Claw, his servants, and seven new supervillains.

The reason this may be the best adventure for ***Champions*** so far is that you don't have to bother with reasons or motivations for your comic-book battles. It's completely mindless. ***GSVC*** offers the perfect justification for simply bringing on your favorite super-villains to punch out the heroes. As with all Hero products, the text is transparently clear and the parenthetical remarks are appropriately tongue-in-cheek. The headquarters is neat and the Claw's motivation is sufficiently nasty for any purpose (it also provides a great springboard for new adventures).

Unfortunately, the cover and interior artwork continue to live down to Hero's egregious standards. Also, this background is not for beginning referees — unless used in conjunction with several other modules. For even the most experienced GM, it's going to take a *lot* of groundwork to bring this crew of characters onstage. Finally, let me single out for scorn the villain Wee Willie: the stupidest power (uncontrollable growth and shrinking), the second-stupidest name (after Marvel Comics' Paste-Pot Pete), and far and away the most colossally stupid costume I have ever encountered — a true bozo villain on every count.

But if you tear out Wee Willie's page, and if you go into it well aware that it's a long-term undertaking, you'll find ***The Great Super-Villain Contest*** exceptionally useful, rewarding, and high-power fun.

—Allen Varney

TRADER CAPTAINS AND MERCHANT PRINCES (FASA); $6.00. Designed by Guy W. McLimore, Jr., Greg K. Poehlein and David F. Tepool. One 8½" x 11" 52-page book. Published 1983.

Although FASA's ***Star Trek: The Role Playing Game*** is undoubtedly among the best of the SFRPGs to be published in recent years (if not *the* best), two major — even valid — criticisms I've heard of it are the episodic, rather than campaign-based, nature of play and the fact that players, as Star Fleet officers, are restricted in action by Star Fleet regulations. With its first major expansion of the ***ST*** system, ***Trader Captains and Merchant Princes***, FASA has wiped out these objections in one fell swoop. Now player-characters can be independent merchants plying the starlanes of the Federation in search of trade, wealth and adventure, as free of the Star Fleet regulations as any character in a ***Traveller*** or ***Space Opera*** campaign — as long, of course, as they can stay one jump ahead. And since the merchant campaign is designed to be just that — a campaign — those who prefer such continuous play over a series of loosely connected scenarios can enjoy the playability, yet completeness, of ***ST:RPG*** and have their campaigns, too. In addition to rules on generating merchant characters, the supplement also features listings of vehicles, ships, weapons and equipment; guidelines on trade in the UFP (some of the most thorough and playable I've seen in *any* SFRPG); notes on running a merchant campaign; and suggestions on working merchants into a Star Fleet campaign. Appendices cover Star Fleet Pay Grades, a Quick Resolution System for Merchant Fleets,

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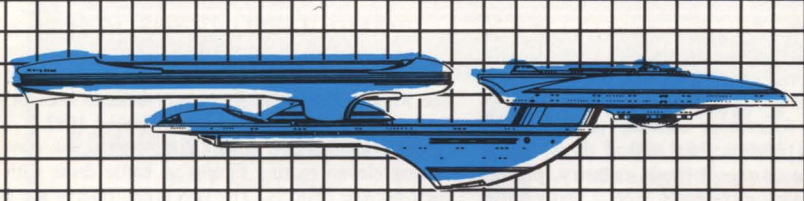

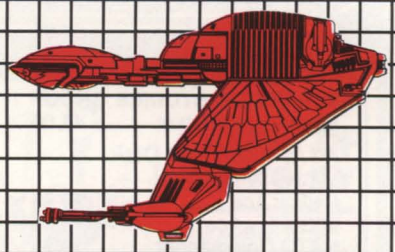

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Familiar Characters (Cyrano Jones and Harry Mudd fleshed out a bit more than in the basic rulebook), and the Federation Stock Market.

This supplement has several nice points to recommend it to the *ST* player. One can pick up the flavor of trading among the stars better with these rules than with the meager trade rules in ***Traveller*** or most other SF games that aren't exclusively economy-oriented. The maps of the Federation — a large one on the back of the book and one of the smaller, original Federation boundaries inside — are helpful in determining distances and travel times for the entire game system (though more detailed maps would still be welcome). A table of warp factors cross-referenced with travel times is also extremely helpful. For the first time, too, players may portray Orion characters, forbidden in Star Fleet due to that race's "neutrality." And long-time *Trek* fans will be gratified to see plans of the *Zeus*-class automated transport ship.

There are, unfortunately, a few problems with the book, mostly connected with typos. Some oversight has left the +10 for INT for Vulcans off the Racial Modifier table. Mining skill appears on the Merchant character sheet, but the skill is not one described or noted as available in character generation. And the lack of a grid on the *Zeus*-class makes scale a bit difficult to determine (should boarding one prove necessary in a game). But these and a few other flaws are mostly minor points.

Overall, ***Trader Captains and Merchant Princes*** is an excellent expansion to an outstanding game. If you already play ***ST:RPG***, you should pick it up. If not, take a look — it might help convince you to switch.

—William A. Barton

COMPUTER GAMES

REACH FOR THE STARS (Strategic Studies Group, Ground Floor, 336 Pitt St., Sydney 200, Australia); $60.00. Designed by Roger Keating with game development and rules by Ian Trout. For the Commodore 64 and the Apple II+ or IIe with 48K and one disk drive. Boxed with a 12-page, 8½" x 11" rulebook, two data cards and a 5¼" floppy disk. For 0–4 players in three to 30 hours. Published 1983.

Reach For The Stars was inspired by Metagaming's ***Stellar Conquest*** (rulebook, page 11). It is a strategic level game of stellar exploration, development, and warfare. In a wraparound globular star cluster, four races compete to find and develop the best worlds, then defend them. The players allocate resources to build industry, planetary defenses, starship research, social and planetary development, and population management. Ships must be built and directed. The player's worlds must be defended. The computer handles the bookkeeping, and plays the sides not played by humans. The game has graphic displays, and assorted information displays.

The computer is not a token player — it plays rough. You, however, can choose three levels of skill. The game runs fast with little waiting for the computer. Starting conditions, victory conditions, and unit costs can be varied before the game starts. The game is easily saved, and has never crashed on me. Extra problems, such as novas, planetary disasters, and alien plagues (?) can be added to make the game tougher. Starting locations and enemy tactics vary even with the same initial setup. No two games are identical. While the game is simpler than the boardgame it is modeled on, play is subtle and complex. Even after over 100 hours, we are still discovering new facets of the rules, developing new tactics, and experimenting with different setups.

Reach For The Stars has few problems. The rulebook leaves a few gaps. Discovering that Global resource points were available to all worlds sped up colonization immensely. It was also not mentioned that the variable victory conditions modification only works with only one player, in the number 1 position; anything else results in scrambled victory conditions.

The control set-up has flaws. The escape key has several functions in the same screen. It is very easy at 3 a.m. to miss the escape and hit "Q." Finally, the most annoying thing is the virtual lack of any opportunity to go back and correct mistakes. Any irreversible actions should require two keystrokes (i.e., a Return) but ***RFTS*** does not.

Reach For The Stars is a most addictive game. After playing 10 to 15 hours a week for several months I still find it hard to save the game and go home. It offers a wide variety of set-up conditions and victory conditions, and play is never the same. The computer is a tough foe. Even after the game is mastered, there are enough options and random variables to keep it from going stale. I cannot recommend it enough.

—Norman Banduch

MINIATURES

IMPERIAL MARINES (Grenadier Models Inc.); $10. A boxed set of twelve metal 25mm figures for ***Traveller***: nine standing marines, two prone, and one Rocket Launcher; four-page scenario booklet. Designed by Andrew Chernak. Released 1983.

Imperial Marines comes in a padded box containing eleven marine figures in battle dress with back-hooked helmets. The two prone figures are a Casualty and a Gunner. The nine standing figures

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are: an Officer pointing, a Medic, two Firing, a Plasma Gunner, an NCO with night laser, two Assaulting, and one Firing While Kneeling. The tiny booklet enclosed includes a description of an officer character, a situation involving tech-12 mercenaries, and a sketch map of Trachon Starport.

The nine standing figures are appropriate for a squad. Details of the figures' elbow and knee joints, helmets, weaponry, and backpacks are well defined. The base of each figure is marked with an identifying number which corresponds to the picture enclosed in the box. Only about three points in the whole set of twelve figures have excess flash — quite frankly, the least I have ever found in a set of figures. The scenario enclosed sets up an action that is logical even for the small scope of the few pages presented. The page of figure illustrations included in the box is a real plus. In addition to the gaping hole in the chest of the Casualty figure is a look of bewilderment in the figure's eyes, as seen through the slot in his helmet.

The 25mm figures require redrawing from scale maps because there are no approved-for-***Traveller*** maps at this scale. However, the difference in the ease of painting 25mm figures and the greater detail possible make this particular problem worth overcoming.

Getting picky, one can find two minor flaws. The first is that the prone figures have no detail on the bottom of their feet. The second is the lack of detail at the top of the 'Firing' figure's backpack, detail which is present in the other figures.

If you want 25mm figures for ***Traveller***, other SFRPGs, or just to paint and display, then this set from Grenadier is well worth $10.

—Ed Edwards

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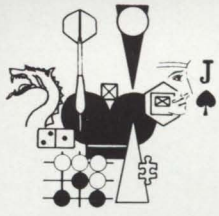

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continued from p. 27

more than 10%. Even that value is closer to the true VP number (12) than it is to any other whole number, so we can truthfully say that when the number given by the algorithm is divided by 5.5 and rounded off, we have an accurate prediction of the victory point value.

The algorithm is further validated by a computation of the VP value of a new unit which will appear in ***Shockwave***, the forthcoming ***Ogre*** expansion set. This unit is the Light GEV, or LGEV for short. The LGEV is a miniature hovertank, crewed by a single daredevil. It has an attack strength of 1, a range of 2, and a defensive strength of 1; it moves like a standard GEV. Putting these figures into the algorithm, we come up with a value of 16.9. Dividing by 5.5, we get a victory point value of 3.07. In point of fact, the LGEV was designed and play-balanced to have a victory point value of half an armor unit — i.e., 3 victory points! So the algorithm predicted its value perfectly.

DESIGNING NEW UNITS

The value of this procedure is that it can be used to determine fair victory-point values for new units. For instance, let's put ourselves in the place of the Paneuropean tank designers. They need something that can deal with a Combine heavy tank . . . but isn't as expensive as a cybertank.

They look at their history books, and see the German tank destroyers of the Second World War . . . and they come up with a super-heavy tracked design. It moves like a heavy tank (M = 3) and it can grind through woods and over streams without flinching. It has extra-heavy armor (D = 4). And it has an attack strength of 6 (!!), with a range of 3.

It has a howitzer-style gun, but with a shorter barrel. When this unit was successful, the Combine copied its function but not its design. The Combine tank destroyer mounts two guns similar to a Heavy Tank's (not giving quite twice the firepower, because they are independently mounted).

There we have it. A new unit for ***Ogre*** and ***G.E.V.*** So — now that we have this monster, what is it worth? Two armor units? One and a half? Three? Care to guess?

In point of fact, the algorithm gives it a worth of 63. Divided by 5.5, that works out to 11.5. So the Tank Destroyer is worth 12 victory points, or two "regular" armor units.

SYSTEM LIMITATIONS

This algorithm does not give values for infantry units; the infantry's special abilities put it in a class by itself. Likewise, this system does not allow for "special abilities" of units. For instance, a unit that had the ability to fire twice in a turn, or to ignore a "D" result, could not accurately be valued by this algorithm.

But it will still allow creation and evaluation of a wide variety of new units — either standard or experimental — for your ***Ogre*** game. Just be sure to stay out from under the treads.

SG

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Gameplay Suspends Publication

Gameplay magazine has suspended publication, and its future is very much up in the air.

"It wasn't meeting the objectives we set for it," said Peter Bromley, one of the owners of Crystal Publications, *Gameplay*'s parent company. Crystal envisioned *Gameplay* as a "newsstand-distributed general interest gaming magazine," Bromley said, and with a circulation of under 5,000, the magazine was not meeting those objectives, either financially or editorially.

Editor Jake Jaquet said the decision to suspend publication was made by "a majority of the stockholders — Darwin Bromley (the president of Mayfair Games) and his brothers, Peter, David, and William." The decision came in mid-April. While Crystal Publications will continue with some other projects — most notably a 1985 fantasy calendar featuring the art of Tim Hildebrandt — Jaquet and two other *Gameplay* staff members will no longer work for Crystal. "We'll all look for gainful employment elsewhere," Jaquet said.

Jaquet was understandably angry with the decision. "I could see myself getting fired or something like that, but not shutting down the whole magazine . . . it has too much potential," he said. "I'm sorry that this has happened, and I'm mildly upset that this decision was made . . . I'd like to try this again sometime."

Contributors to *Gameplay* will be paid, Jaquet said, and all submitted manuscripts will be returned. Bromley said that while no decision had been made about what to do about the paid subscribers, "we'll try to extend some effort to satisfy" them.

Crystal Publications will now take some time out to "rethink the magazine," Bromley said, and he said one of the possibilities under consideration was the production of another gaming effort in the future. "We expect to eventually come out with a magazine," he said. The new publication might even retain the title *Gameplay*, though Bromley said that decision, as well as many others, had not been made yet. At any rate, Bromley said, no new magazine would be launched within the next three months.

The final issue of *Gameplay*, No. 14, was at the printer when the decision to suspend publication was made. Issue 14 will be distributed normally, and all subscribers will receive a letter explaining the situation in the near future, Bromley said.

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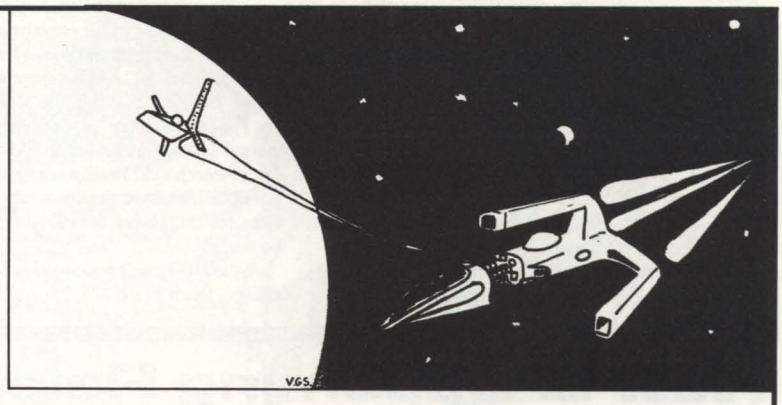

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News Briefs

TSR to Showcase Marvel Game at Origins

The *Marvel Super Heroes Role Playing Game*, which was released last month, will be TSR's showcase display at Dallas Origins, according to the game corporation's public relations director, Dieter Sturm.

The Marvel game is a significant release for TSR for two reasons. One, it marks their entry into the popular superhero role-playing field. It is also significant because TSR chose to debut this game at Origins rather than at GEN CON, their own gaming convention. "We're very pleased to be returning to Origins," Sturm said. The release of the Marvel role-playing game guarantees it's more than a token appearance.

Other releases TSR plans for this summer include an Indiana Jones role-playing game, tentatively set for a late-summer release, and special modules for ***Star Frontiers*** tying into the upcoming movie, ***2010 — Odyssey Two***. A *2001* module will also be released at the same time.

TSR Lays Off 56

TSR, Inc., announced a "permanent worksforce reduction" of 56 employees in April. Most of the laid-off employees worked in the sales, marketing and advertising departments.

TSR Public Relations Director Dieter Sturm called the layoffs "a planned move to upgrade the focus of management's directions and efforts in addition to further reducing operating expenses to meet the cash flow needs of the company."

Sturm said TSR enjoyed a sales increase of 26.2 percent in the first eight months of fiscal 1984 compared to the same period the year before. "It was nothing more, really, than a business decision," Sturm said. The layoffs drop TSR's workforce to approximately 220. Just before a similar round of layoffs last summer, TSR had a high of 330 employees.

West End, Costikyan Working on Anthology

West End is working on an anthology series called *FTL*, which will combine a complete game and gaming articles with fiction and non-fiction in the science and fantasy field. Greg Costikyan, freelance designer and consultant for West End, will edit.

The project is still in search of a co-publisher in the book industry, Costikyan said. West End is to act as co-publisher in charge of all gaming material, while the as-yet-undiscovered book publisher will take care of the literary material.

Costikyan feels optimistic about the project. "I think it has a good shot at working," he said. Costikyan is accepting submissions now for the magazine and paying on acceptance. Write Greg Costikyan, *"FTL,"* 251 West 30th Street #4FE, New York, NY 10001. Costikyan hopes to have the first issue out some time this fall.

***Space Taxi* Out for Commodore 64**

Muse Software has announced the release of ***Space Taxi***, an arcade-style game produced solely for the Commodore 64 home computer.

The driver of the space taxi must guide it through a futuristic city, picking up fares and avoiding hazards. The game has 25 different screens, and Muse Software boasts that no one — not even the designer — has completed the entire series in one shot.

The game requires Commodore's 1541 disk drive to play, and has a suggested retail price of $29.95.

Infocom Releases Undersea Adventure

Seastalker, an interactive fiction computer game designed for beginners, will be released in June by Infocom. The game is written by Stu Galley (author of Infocom's ***The Witness***) and children's writer Jim Lawrence.

"***Seastalker*** isn't just a game," Infocom Product Manager Michael Dornbrook said. "It's a totally interactive story that encourages logical thinking, planning and organization. Although this junior level product is tailored for the younger set, the whole family will enjoy the story."

The ***Seastalker*** player must take an experimental submarine and rescue the crew of an undersea research station. But many hazards, including a possible traitor at the research station, pose problems for the player to solve before the mission can be completed.

Seastalker will be available for most home computers, retail price $39.95.

Convention Calendar

Portland, OR – WESTERCON 37, June 29 - July 3. SF con; Guest of Honor is Harlan Ellison. Contact Westercon 37, P.O. Box 16155, Portland, OR 97216.

Mobile, AL – GULFCON '84, July 6 - 8. SF con emphasizing *Dr. Who*. Contact Gulfcon '84, Box 16966, Mobile, AL 36616.

***St. Louis, MO** – GATEWAY-CON II, July 27 - 29. SJ Games will attend this gaming con. Contact Gateway Conventions, 305 Glyn Cagny, St. Louis, MO 63011.

Salem, VA – MYSTICON 3, August 3 - 5. SF con featuring Karl Edward Wagner. Contact Mysticon 3, Box 1367, Salem, VA 24153.

Annapolis, MD – PHOENIXCON '84, Aug. 24 - 26. Not held in Phoenix, this Maryland con features Judson Scott and other film and TV stars. Contact Phoenixcon, Box 599, Arnold, MD 21012.

***Los Angeles, CA** – WORLDCON, August 30 - September 3. The World Science Fiction Convention. Guest of Honor is Gordon R. Dickson. Contact L.A.Con II, Box 8442, Van Nuys, CA 91409.

***Cleveland, OH** – EARTHCON IV, Sept. 7 - 9. SF and gaming con. Steve Jackson is Gaming Guest of Honor. Contact Earthcon IV, 1553 Second Street #1, Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44221.

Schenectady, NY – TENTH ANNUAL COUNCIL OF 5 NATIONS, October 5 - 8. Gaming con. Contact I.M. Lord, SWA 10th Council, 1639 Eastern Parkway, Schenectady, NY 12309.

Columbus, OH – COGACON '84, Oct. 20 - 21. Gaming con on the Ohio St. campus. Contact Paul T. Riegel, c/o War Game Designs, 6119 East Main St. #202, Columbus, OH 43213.

SJ Games will attend those cons marked with an asterisk.

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New & Upcoming Releases

Pacesetter Debuts New RPG Line with 'Chill'

Chill, a horror role-playing game set for a May release, is the first in a new line of games by Pacesetter, Ltd., a Wisconsin company made up of former TSR employees. Two more role-playing games, and modules for all three, are also set for release this summer.

"We've got all the front-line creative talent from TSR in an atmosphere where it's easy to create," Troy Denning, Pacesetter's Operations Manager and a former manager at TSR said. "It's amazing how easy it is to do product when you don't have bureaucracy in the way."

Other former TSR staffers now with Pacesetter include John Ricketts, former Executive Vice President of the TSR Games Division; game designers, Garry Spiegle and Gali Sanchez; Senior Designer Mark Acres; editors Michael Williams and Andria Hayday; and designer Carl Smith.

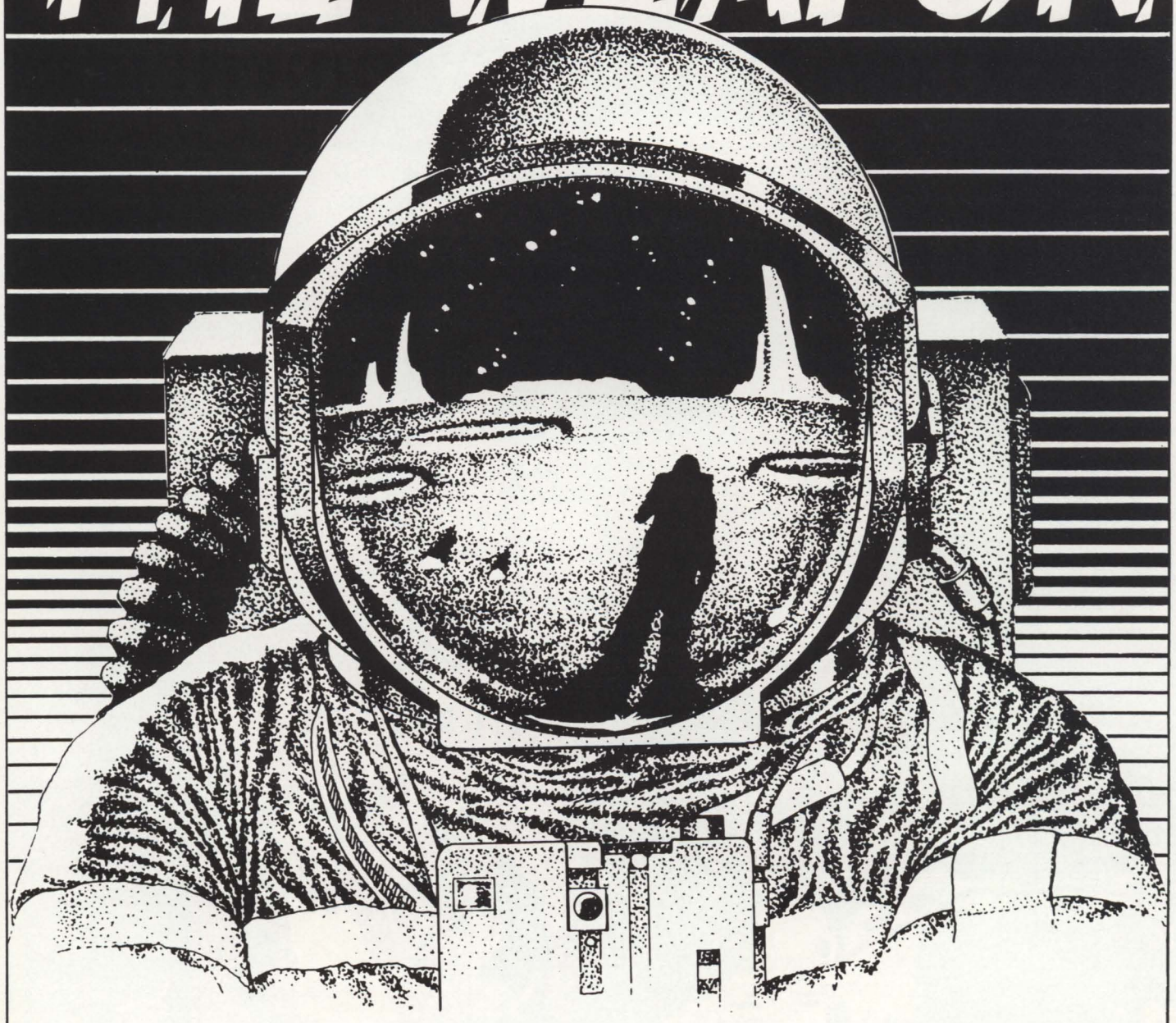
Spiegle and Sanchez are the designers of ***Chill***, and Acres is credited as the developer. "***Chill*** is not heroic adventure," Acres said. "The point of playing the game is not going out and showing how powerful your character is. The point of playing the game is to have fun by being scared."

Chill is also set up for game players with no role-playing experience. "The biggest hassle for people who aren't familiar with roleplaying is having to read the rulebook first," Denning said. According to Denning, a beginning player could open the box and begin playing a simple scenario within 30 minutes.

Chill includes a rules folder, character cards and a 16-page module for beginners; a 64-page campaign book and a book of monsters for advanced players, 140 counters, a four-color map and three 10-sided dice. Suggested retail price is $12.

The first separate module for ***Chill***, "Village of Twilight," is scheduled for an Origins release. Pacesetter also plans to release its second game, ***Timemaster***, at Origins. ***Timemaster*** is a game in which players are 72nd-century members of a time-traveling patrol, trying to stop enemy races from interfering with history. A science-fiction role-playing game, ***Star Aces***, is due out in September.

THE WEAPON



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Ugly, slobbering, bug-eyed monsters! They land in remote American towns and make off with women.

BUG-EYED MONSTERS is the new West End release by Greg Costikyan, designer of the successful *Creature That Ate Sheboygan.*™ In this game, Greg returns to the "Creature" genre, bringing a flying saucer with menacing monsters to the quiet remote American town of Freedom, New Hampshire.

One player, as the monster, must attempt to kidnap the earthling women (the most beautiful in the universe). The other player must rally the citizens of the town to stop the repulsive invaders and save his womenfolk from a fate worse then death.

A special "Aliens Kidnap Presidential Hopeful" scenario is also provided. Dwight Eisenhower, campaigning for the New Hampshire primary, along with an entourage of state troopers and secret service men, is surprised by a party of bug-eyed monsters. Will they kidnap America's war hero?

A simple but elegant game system with clear brief rules makes BUG-EYED MONSTERS a good introduction to adventure gaming, but its subject and smooth play will appeal to the hardcore gamer as well.

THE DESIGNER

Greg Costikyan is the designer of nine published games, including THE CREATURE THAT ATE SHEBOYGAN,™ SWORDS AND SORCERY,™ DEATH MAZE,™ RETURN OF THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT,™ and TRAIL BLAZER.™

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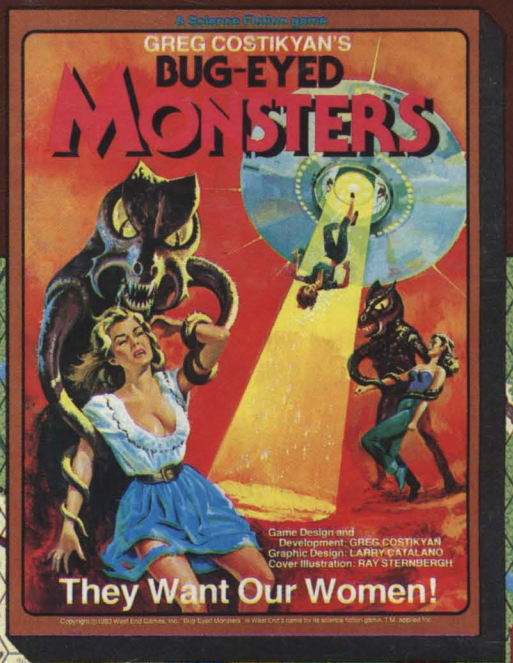
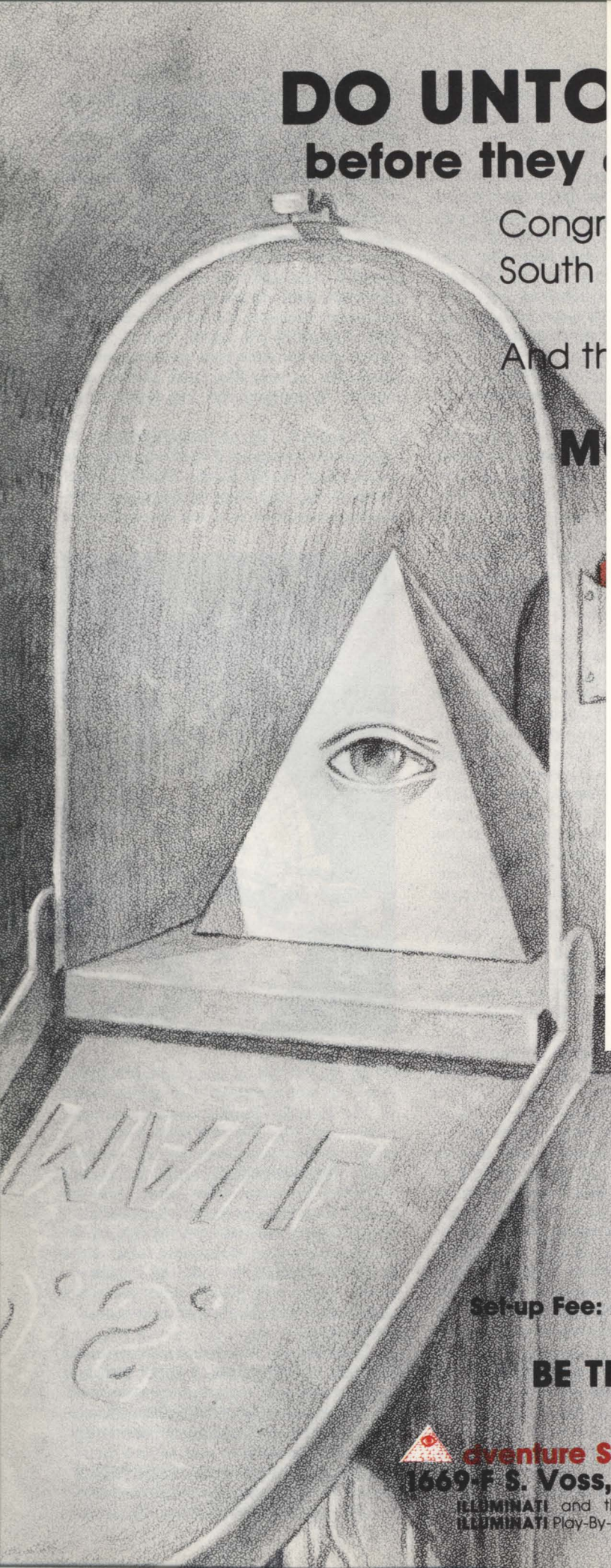
- one 8-page rules booklet
- two dice and full-color game box (1" wide bookshelf size box)



WEST END GAMES

Complexity: Low
Solitaire Suitability: Low
Players: Two
Game Scale: Individual Person
Playing Time: An hour or less for experienced gamers



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f the high — and low —
n role-playing in 1983,
contender, ***Star Trek:***

The Role-Playing Game, to the ailing but still-hanging-in-there champ, ***Traveller***. When it comes to the awards at this year's Origins, I predict ***Star Trek*** will be the winner. Competition may come from ***Superworld***, ***MSPE***, or any of several dark horse SF or FRPGs released last year — perhaps even ***James Bond 007*** if enough voters ignore its flaws. Still, I will personally be very surprised if the obvious choice — ***Star Trek*** — is passed by for top honors. Of course, I've been surprised in the past by some award choices, and anything can happen in the final analysis. Whatever happens at Origins. I'm certain 1983 will be remembered as a "fascinating" year for science fiction role-playing games. **SG**

magnitude is — how many *care*?) — not something that's going to mean a lot in play to most gamers. At least ***Scouts*** did finally see the light of day, though I think GDW would have been better advised letting the Keiths handle this one. Other promised items, such as the highly touted ***Traveller Adventure***, which had to go through several rewrites by Andy Keith and others before it was publishable, never did make it out in 1983.

One bright spot on the ***Traveller*** horizon came with a new series of licensed supplements and adventures from Gamelords (why is it the best ***Traveller*** items are *still* coming from licensees?). Gamelords' ***Lee's Guide to Interstellar Space***, a book of short adventure situations a referee could build into complete scenarios, was not overly inventive, but still beat GDW offerings in a similar vein, such as ***76 Patrons***, hands down. Andy Keith's ***The Undersea Environment*** supplement for adventuring underwater was probably the most innovative, useful ***Traveller*** item released all

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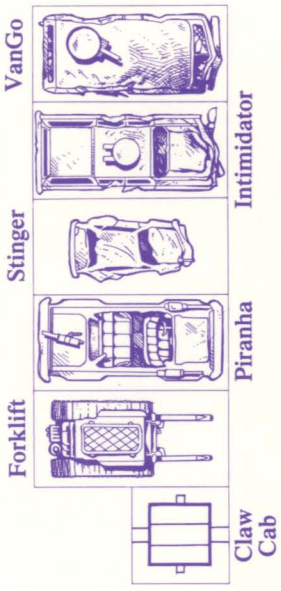

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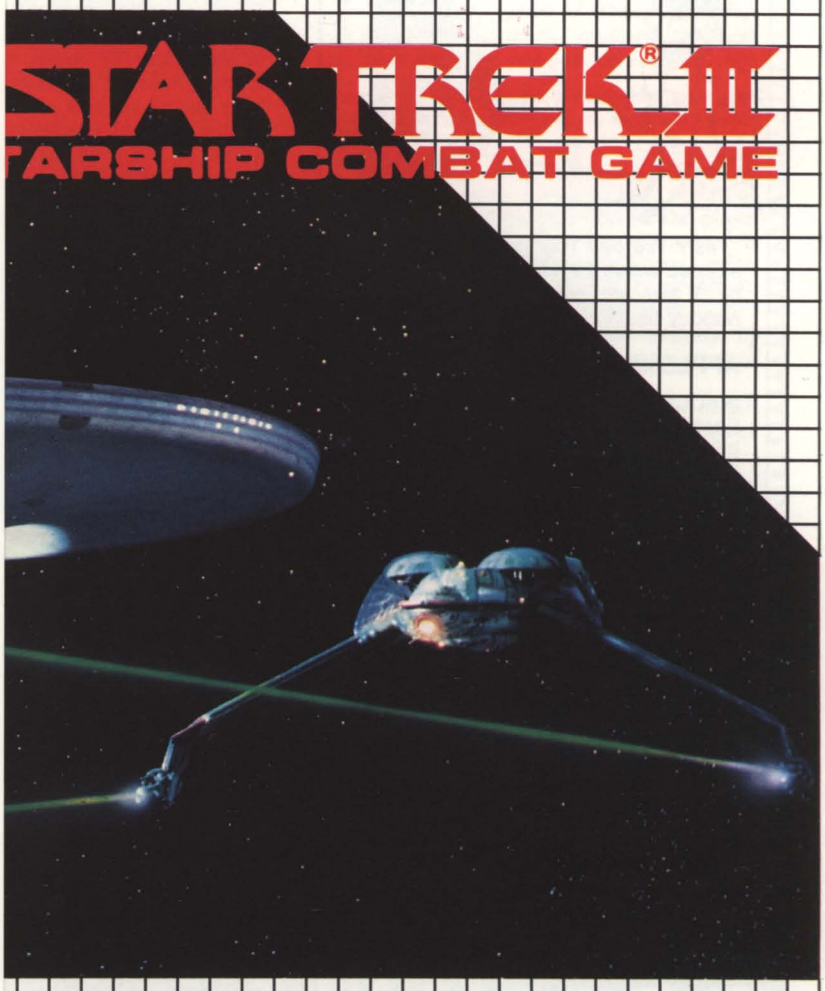

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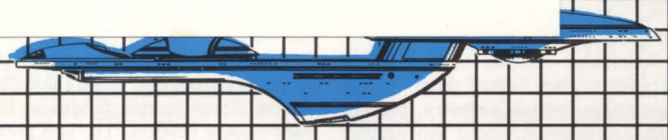

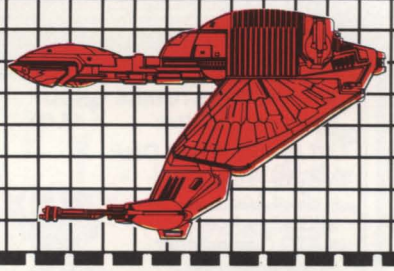

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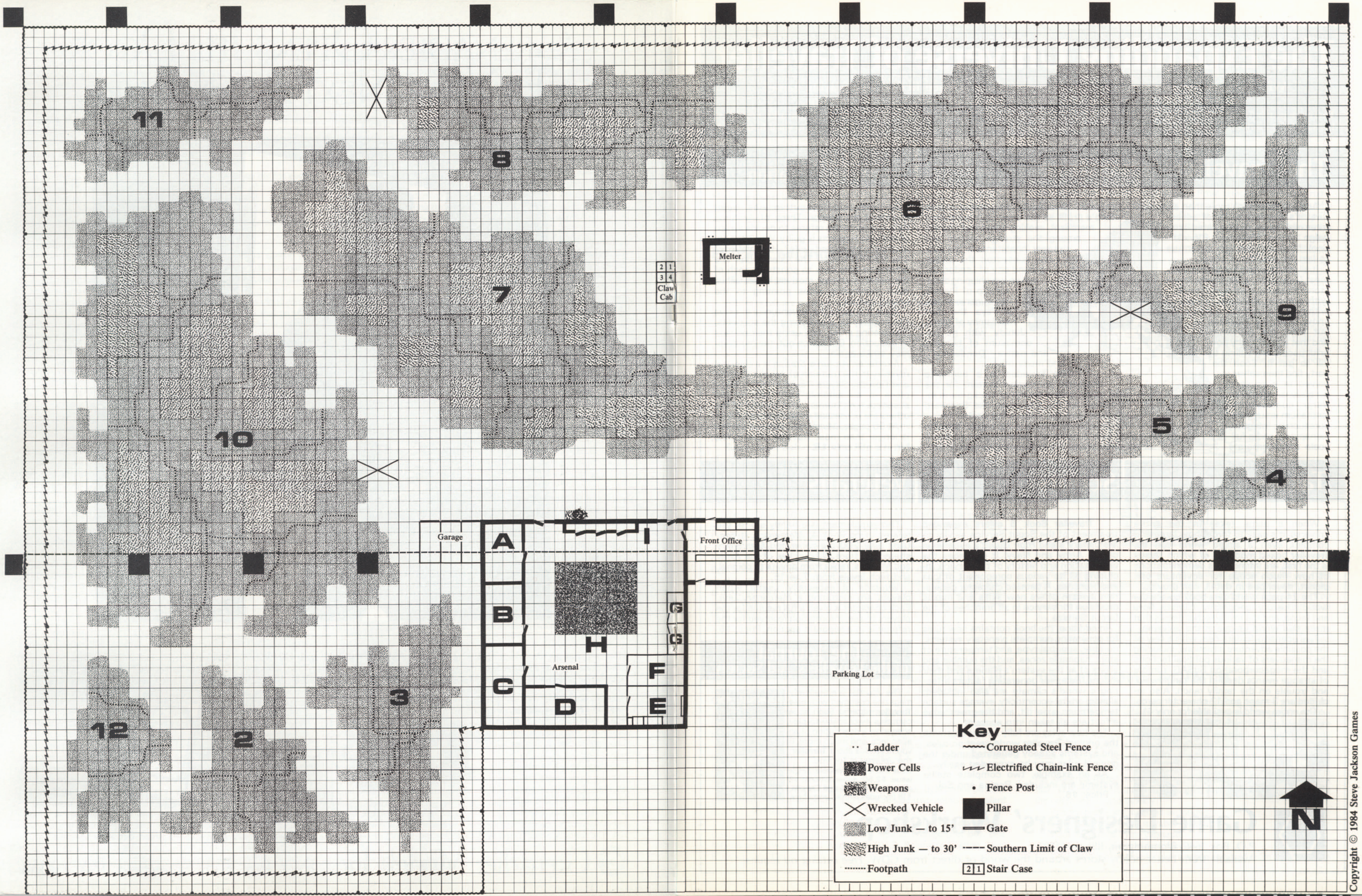

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